

中二病でも恋

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がしたい!

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中二病 でも

★ 2

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恋がしたい!

Chūnibyō demo koi ga shitai!



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「勇太は私との契約を忘れてる！」

「待ってって……」

Chuunibyou Demo Koi ga Shitai!

(She has Chuunibyou, But I Want to Love Her!)

Volume 2

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The Prologue is Again about My Coolness!!

Man, I'm sorry to suddenly bring this up again, but I have a confession to make. This time, though, it's not a confession about me, Yuuta Togashi. It's about Rikka Takanashi. Rikka... is my girlfriend. She's also currently a high school student infected with chuunibyou.

And so I have a confession—or rather, a report—about Rikka.

She's been cured of chuunibyou! You know, the disease that, if anyone brings it up, makes you say in agony, "Oh, god! Don't say it! That's my dark past!" Well, she isn't cured, really. She's still the user of the Devilish Truth Stare. But this report is about a time when she didn't wear her eyepatch.

On the day I confessed to her, she said it would be all right to go to school without wearing it. Naturally, like anyone would be, the class was surprised to see a girl with mismatched eye colors. But strangely enough, it boosted her popularity among our classmates. She's somewhat well-liked now.

Since then she's gone back to wearing the eyepatch. You might doubt that she ever went without it at all, but trust me, she didn't wear it that day. Regardless, she's back to full attire now.

According to her: "Constantly unleashing the Devilish Truth Stare places an extra-ordinate amount of stress on my body, thus recovery time is needed." She probably just thinks the eyepatch is cool. Personally, I think it's cool too.

... Well, mismatched eye colors are pretty awesome too.

So let's continue my report on Rikka. Our after-school study sessions continued until she passed the makeup math test on the third try. Yes, the third try. By the time she passed, I was so overjoyed that I was crying inside.

But as it took three tries, our teacher Nanase Tsukumo (nicknamed Nana-chan) wasn't amused at all. After being shocked at her 15 on the first re-

test, Nana-chan wrote, “Keep at it and you’ll pass math!” Finally, Rikka ended up getting a 73 (just barely passing the re-test cutoff of 70), showing her progress with my help.

By the way, just as an aside, Nibutani passed on the first try, saying “I could do it if I really tried” with that sadistic smile of hers. I thought, “Why didn’t you really try on the first test?” but I stopped myself before saying it and risking an even worse look from her.

As for Rikka’s science makeup, she was able to memorize the facts and pass it on the first try. She’s got a pretty good memory, so it only took one full review before she passed.

And so, just like that, her makeup tests were over. It had been a month since we first became a couple. Well, to be precise, we were now at three days before the end of the first month.

Because we were focused on the makeup tests, and the hell which our school calls finals was now approaching, we weren’t able to play around much during this month. Well, we would take a break on Sundays, where I’d go over to Rikka’s apartment and we’d play games together. But really, we haven’t even gone on a date yet.

It’s somewhat embarrassing, but I haven’t been on a date before. Still, I’ve decided that we will celebrate a month together by going on a date. Unfortunately, I’ve not yet asked her out. I’m not sure what’ll happen, but I swear I’ll give it my best shot.

You know, the first date is what can make a couple, right? If it doesn’t go well, then there’s no “next date” after all.

But with our celebratory first date in mind, I planned on spending a lovey-dovey summer vacation with Rikka.

Of course, something had to happen. I could say it was a stroke of luck, that this was a chance event... but, no. Perhaps I should say it was fate. I'm sure that's what she would say.

And so, thanks to a stroke of fate, I was reunited with my dear old friend.

Chapter 1 : Eternal Connections

“Oh right, would... would you like to go on a date?”

It was after school on the last day of finals. Rikka and I were at my desk together, the way we'd been at every study session. After comparing our responses, we began a card game, and somehow I managed to ask her out unconsciously, as I was reading the blurb on a card. Can't you just feel how arbitrary that sounds?

“Yuuta, that card doesn't have that effect, does it?”

“Huh? Ah, I wasn't talking about cards. I really meant to ask you on a date...”

“?”

The way Rikka tilted her head, it looked like she didn't understand at all. Ugh... Don't make me embarrass myself even more, please? I guess I'd ask her again after the game. Just focus on winning... right?

“Alright! This card gives all my guys a boost! Now then, everyone attack her directly!”

“Ugh... That's unfair.”

“Unfair?! No, this is just a normal card. It's not even rare! How could playing a normal card be considered unfair?”

Rikka, ignoring my objection, looked as though she thought I stacked my deck. After calculating the points, it was clear I won the match.

“Hmm, looks like I win again!”

“Ugh...” Rikka groaned. I thought I saw a little tear in her eyes. Well, I was in a five-game winning streak after all. When you win five in a row, you start to feel like luck is just on your side.

To be honest, it’s all in the deck. My deck had plenty of strong cards. Just call me Joey Junior! (The early days, of course.)

I had to admit that Rikka’s deck wasn’t that good, and neither was her talent at card games. It almost felt bad winning against someone so untalented. Should I have taken it easy on her... Nah, I had to win.

“How could my *Complete Darkness –Dark Magic-Dark Vision-Demon* deck lose...”

“Your deck’s greatest ability is its name?!” Evidently, Rikka just focused on making everything fit that naming pattern. I have to admit, she beats me when it comes to naming things.

“Well, there’s a lot of strong dark cards out there. You just have to use them better in combination... Look at my newly named *This deck is really horrible, isn’t it?* cards. They are meant to be played together, right?”

“Ohh... Teach me how to build my deck, Yuuta...”

Rikka was usually not that whiny, nor that docile. Usually she’d say something like “My ultimate deck won’t lose to the likes of you!” but I suppose losing five times in a row changes how you speak. Maybe she said that so she could learn my secrets and beat me at my own game.

It had only been a month since we first started to talk to each other, but I was still seeing new cute sides of her. It really made me happy. Yeah, I’m already feeling nostalgic....Well, I think everyone feels like that when you first start going out.

Anyway, Rikka was smartly dressed in the vest our school uses for its summer uniforms. She might be the expert when it comes to using black in your wardrobe, but I wouldn't say she was the person to go to for summer wear. Even now, she was wearing our blazer on top of a short sleeve blouse and the beige vest. Our school didn't allow many choices in vest colors: You had your standard white, gray, and beige. Of course, Rikka would choose black in a heartbeat if she was allowed.

You might notice that she's bandaged her left arm. Once the winter-style blazer came off, it's the first thing you'd point your attention to. And matched with the crimson plaid skirt, you have a sight that can't be missed! I wouldn't dare protest against how thin the blouses seem to be.

Sorry, that was supposed to be a joke.

Incidentally, today Rikka went without her eyepatch. Across from me were black and gold pupils. Suddenly those pupils looked right at me.

"Oh yes, Yuuta. Didn't you say something a little while ago, or was that my imagination?"

"Ah, yeah. Ummm." Suddenly I'd lost the determination to ask again. Maybe I couldn't say something that embarrassing face-to-face? If you tried to ask something you've never asked before, wouldn't you get red in the face too?

But it's been almost one month. This was supposed to be in celebration of that milestone after all. At the same time, I've never been used to saying the word "date" before now. It's a bit sad when you think about it that way. I'd stand my ground and ask again.

"Um... It's almost been a month since we started going out. I thought we could celebrate it somehow, like going on a date, or something."

"A date?"

As she finally realized what that word meant, you could see the light go on in Rikka's head. Afterwards she nodded many times yes. That awfully cute gesture brought me to smile as widely as possible.

"It's just something I wanted to do to celebrate, all right?"

"One month...Then let's begin a new contract. Give me your left hand, Yuuta."

I commented "My left hand?" as I reached towards her. Already there was a nicely drawn "yu" on the back of it from her magic marker, as proof of another contract. She retrieved another marker from somewhere.

"What do you plan to do!?"

"I shall execute a new contract to mark the one month time point. Now close your eyes, Yuuta. If you open them, you will die."

"Do you want to kill me?!" Death to celebrate your first month. No better word describes that sensation than "yandere."¹

But aside from that, how would this affect my day-to-day life like the others have? Oh how I wished we could do something like this without my life in the balance. I'm not sure how many lives I have left.

"Hurry and close them."

"Okay..."

As soon as I closed my eyes, I heard the "pop" as the cap came off the marker. Just like on her birthday, I could feel the writing on the back of my hand for about five minutes. Then,

"Wow! This is amazing!"

¹ A type of love that is obsessed with ensuring you only have eyes for them. Violently obsessed.

“It is proof that a new contract has been made!” Didn’t she say the same thing on her birthday? And didn’t she have this happy expression then as well? Perhaps, I too look as happy as she does.

Once again, as proof of our newest contract, there was a curvy “yu” written in hiragana on the back of my hand. It’s getting to be like my own cool coat of arms you know? One of those things that you swear to defend at all costs.

“Do you like it?”

“Well, of course. This is cool!” It was cool alright, but, well... It stands out too much! I’ll worry about that later.

“So what does this contract make me do?”

Rikka looked a bit shy as she said, “...This contract will ensure you take me on a date.” OH! That’s so cute!

“You don’t need to worry. I’m a guy who always keeps his promises, so I’ll keep this one. As long as I promise you something, it’ll work out.”

In response, Rikka called me “The promised man.” I don’t think I like that nickname at all. Let me retract my previous remarks.

“Well, I really liked you calling me ‘Yuuta’ instead... Let’s move on. When should we go out? Exactly one month would be Monday, so... Sunday sound good to you?”

“Agreeable.”

Rikka pulled out her red and black calendar (so cute!) and then wrote “Hyper Date Time” with a fluorescent pink marker in Sunday’s box. She then emphasized it with a heart.

Seriously? “Hyper Date Time”? She did add a heart, so I can’t complain too much.

“So, where should we go?” I asked. “Is there anywhere in particular you want to go to? I’m fine with anything!”

“You’re fine with anything? Are you using searching powers to find somewhere to go to?”

“What searching powers are there?!” Who would want the power to search? Who’d want to say “I’ll look over there or something?” Probably some kind of machine, I bet.

Um, weren’t we talking about where to go on our date... Well, honestly, wherever Rikka wanted to go, I’d be there too.

“Since Yuuta is the Dark Flame Master, somewhere dark and fiery would be recommended. You have to go where your strengths are. Shall we research a new finishing move?”

“Maybe... another time... It’s our only first date, so I was hoping to go somewhere that fits that feeling.”

“Oh. Shall we investigate the demon world together instead?”

No no no. Though, I can’t say that wouldn’t be fun. I, too, used to play by myself and search for holes that connected the demon world and this world. I would also pretend to be a super ghost buster. That’s fun and all, but I’m going to request that we go on a normal date this time.

“I got it. How about we do that next time? Yeah, since I asked you out this time, I’ll take care of the plans. Does that sound good?”

“Oooh, you do have a point. This time you get to choose. I look forward to it.”

Rikka looked a bit down after that, but she quickly changed to looking happy as she let me take care of it. No need to worry about it.

On the other hand, she said that she was leaving it to me. I still don't have any idea what to do on our very important first date. What should I do...

Oh well. Guess I'll have to talk about it with our friendly neighborhood pervert tomorrow. I made sure to jot down that very important "date" notice in my cell phone planner.

With enthusiasm I didn't see coming, Rikka abruptly said, "Now that the date has been decided, let's play five more matches!"

Be honest, who saw that coming? Our card game battles continued on. I don't think it bears detailing, but I ended up winning five more in a row.

After the tenth game, Rikka declared: "We'll play cards on our date!" Another temper tantrum. She really hates to lose.



Time passed until after school the next day. As this was Saturday, after school meant lunchtime.

"Hmm. So the time's come for you guys to finally go on a date? As your cupid, nay, your foreman of love, I'm extremely pleased to hear about this."

Yeah, that was the "serious as his name says," Makoto Isshiki, talking while stuffing his face with cutlet and rice. I was also eating the same thing today.

We don't normally eat in the cafeteria together. I usually spend about half the week with him and half the week with Rikka. Today was a Rikka day, but

she had to head to her apartment to prepare for tomorrow, so it turned into a lunch day with this guy instead. Given that we're having a conversation today, his days next week are going to be reduced.

"Man, I'm really grateful for all that you've done for me with regards to Rikka. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart. Now, having said that, hearing you call yourself the foreman of love creeps me out."

"I didn't think it'd be creepy. You've called me a pervert and I haven't complained about it. Well, guess it's not too creepy to be called that."

He's starting to take pride in being called a pervert. Everyone's favorite pervert. Your textbook example of perversion. In a way, that could be considered cool. But let's ignore that memo for now.

"Well, it wasn't just me who realized that side of you, man. No offense, but even all the time you've spent denying it wasn't good enough."

Isshiki just looked at me and confidently replied, "Heh, it is what I do." I don't think I've ever said that before. Wonder if it would sound as cool if I tried using it.

"Let's get back to the real matter at hand. Where should I take Rikka on our date?"

"Where should you go, huh? I'd say go to some place she likes. How about the movies or the amusement park? Maybe a little shopping would be all right too. Don't chicks love that kind of thing?"

"Well, I'm sure she likes shopping for things but... That just doesn't sound right. It's our first date, so I'd like to have something that fits that mood."

I looked down at the cutlet on my plate. Just talking about the first date mood was already making me shy.

“Gotcha. I can’t say I don’t know what you mean. You don’t want to be telling me about how horrible your first date went after all. Oh, that reminds me of something I heard. It may be true, or it may just be a rumor, but do you want to hear it?”

“How could you say that and not expect me to say yes?! Tell me!” As you might expect, my voice was a little bit loud as I shouted that out. Maybe I could use this story as a reference somehow. I am a hard-studying student after all. I should learn and make sure this date is a success!

“Pay attention, buddy, as I begin this tale. What happened was...” Isshiki began speaking in a low tone as if he was telling a Japanese folktale. “When I heard, I was shocked to find out that... Kannagi-san — yes, that Kazari Kannagi-san... and the upperclassman she was going out with, were separated because of... YOU!”

“AHHHHHH!” It’s my fault they broke up?! What is this idiot saying?! Damn it Isshiki! You spooked me good on that one. You misleading bastard. I curse you and that smirk on your face.

... Wait, did you just insert me into something again?

“Haha! You should’ve seen how shocked you looked from that!”

Just close your eyes, Isshiki, and things will be all right. Damn you. What makes it worse is that while I’m pissed off, he’s continuing on without a worry in the world.

“Let me tell you something interesting I heard, Togashi. Kannagi-san really broke up with that guy, and yes, it was on their first date too. Seems that guy wanted their relationship to move much faster than she did. He leaned in for a kiss and she slapped him in the face. Isn’t that great?! Now that Kannagi-san is free again, your heart can rest easy.”

“Ah, that is some good news. She’s like the idol for our class, so hearing she had a boyfriend really shocked me when I heard about him. So the lesson is not to be overbearing. Got it.”

“Yeah, I suppose you could say that’s something you could learn. Don’t be too greedy on the first date. Thankfully, we herbivore men don’t have to worry about that. The only ones who’ll suffer will be those idiotic macho men.”² Isshiki looked a bit sad thinking about society. He looked over at me.

... Hey now, you know I’m not a carnivore myself. “I understand, man. I’ll keep that in mind. But I wanted to know where to go on a date. Just going to her place would be somewhat depressing. Granted, I’ve been there before and it’s not bad.”

“What?! You’ve... already been to her home...?! You’re putting on the moves fast, aren’t you? You stud!”

“It’s not like that... We just play some games at her apartment... Would you like to come and make it a get-together? I’ll warn you, Rikka’s pretty good. Well, she could be even better than that depending on the game.”

“Hmm... While I appreciate your most generous offer, I must decline. I have sworn my life to dating sims and alas, I cannot play another genre.”

Then why do you play at the arcades? This guy probably had a whole room of those games. Just... how devoted can you be?

“Hmm... We’ve gone off track again! Isshiki-san, tell me a good place to go on a date!”

“You’re still at it, guy? Anywhere’s good, you know. As long as she ends up liking the place, it’ll be all right. Arcades, karaoke, anywhere is fine. If you

² In Japan, there’s a pop culture term called the herbivore man and the carnivore (wo)man. The herbivore man doesn’t do a lot of the traditional male stereotypes.

have fun, that's all that matters. Of course, I'd recommend the pool. You'd get to see her in a cute swimsuit! Not to mention the other babes there too!"

"A swimsuit!" I understand now. Would I like to see Rikka in her swimsuit? You bet I would. She'd probably have some kind of gothic lolita style suit. Oooh, I'm getting excited already!

Oh man, I didn't think of that before. Well, it didn't occur to me to go there. After all, having your first date at a pool would be...

"Dude, I told you. As long as it's you together, anywhere will be fine."

"That so? Well, let me think about it by myself some more."

Isshiki gently replied, "You do that pal." Yeah, this guy is definitely someone you can count on.

"I've got something else to ask, too. What kind of present should I get her to celebrate one month together?"

"Dude, I have no idea what to tell you on that one. I'd say anything sounds good to me... Sorry, I got to jet for a council meeting!"

Isshiki looked at his watch and devoured the rest of his lunch. After finishing, he made sure to properly tidy his plate and put away his chopsticks. Yep, he's determined all right.

"Ah, thank you for everything."

"No problem. Feel free to chat with me any time. I am your foreman of love. Later."

Of course, he had that perverted grin on his face as he returned his tray and quickly ran out of the cafeteria. Guess he chatted with me until the very last minute. He was a great guy, though. Now it was my turn to finish eating lunch.

All right, I'm by myself now. What should I do? Isshiki left before advising me on a present, and I still haven't decided where to go tomorrow. I don't want to decide when I'm going to her apartment, so I need to get some advice from someone else.

But that said, who could I ask for help... I'm out of options, so I guess I'll finish this cutlet and rice and head back to the classroom.

As I was debating what to do, I heard a voice from behind me.

"Oh, isn't that Togashi-kun? Are you by yourself today? That's kinda rare. I'm by myself as well, so do you mind if I join you?"

Without any permission, this person sat down to my left. I could hear a tiny voice going, "Heh heh heh, today's lunch is cod roe spaghetti."

And then I saw who it was. Next to me was the girl I had just been talking about: Kazari Kannagi, the girl who was like an angel to Rikka and me. Lately, we've been on pretty good terms with Kannagi-san—er, well, we call her Kazari-chan now.

Ever since our class trip and the time Rikka came to school without her eyepatch, Kazari-chan has been chatting with Rikka a lot. They seem to have hit it off well. Kazari-chan is actually an avid gamer and gets very excited when those topics come up. I've been counting my blessings to be on good terms with her.

Oh yeah, she herself said "Ahaha! You know, you can call me Kazari-chan. I've become accustomed to it by now." So that's why I call her that.

That's just how she is. She's a cute idol whose beauty transcends the school. Even though she wears the same uniform Rikka does, it's a much different impact on you.

Kazari-chan looked at me while slurping her cod roe spaghetti and asked, “Oh? Togashi-kun, why are you wearing a glove on just your left hand?” I looked up for a second and tried to maintain my composure from that sudden question.

“... This is...”

“Oh yeah, it looks like you’ve awakened your fashion sense too. Isn’t that Chantilly? You’re quite the herbivore!”

“...” It’s been that type of day for me. I’m just a guy; I’m not an herbivore! If anything, I’m the chuunibyou type. Of course, I can’t say that word out loud. You know, I’ve been learning a lot about Kazari as we’ve gotten to know each other over the past couple weeks.

“Well, this is... Right, it’s sealing something.”

“Huh? What do you mean?” Kazari-chan stopped in mid-slurp and looked at me with her eyes wide open.

I guess it’ll be fine if Kazari-chan sees it. I took off my half-finger glove and showed my hand to her. That glove has served its purpose since I bought it.

“Whoa! This is amazing. It’s super cool! It’s like you’re from the Shuffle Alliance!”

“I’m not sure this fits that example!” Well, it’s not the “yu” you’d see in cards.

“Hehehe. It’s quite well-drawn, isn’t it? I assume Rikka-chan drew it? How nice! I want her to draw one on my hand!”

She’s jealous of this? Well, as much as I’d love to talk about it, there’s something else I’d like her opinion on. I can’t believe what good timing it was for her to sit beside me like this. Now I can ask someone else about my pressing matter.

“Hey, this might be sudden, but... what kind of present would you recommend giving someone to celebrate one month together?”

“Hmm... I guess you hadn’t heard Togashi-kun. I just broke up with my boyfriend.”

Ah... That’s right. I had just heard about that. What have I done...

“So-Sorry! I’m really sorry! I didn’t mean to hurt you...”

“Ahaha! Don’t worry about it. I was just teasing you. But anyways, I’d like something yuri-related myself.”

“Yuri?!” I’m learning more and more about her. Wait?! Didn’t she just have a boyfriend?!

“Nope, that was just camouflage. If it leaked out that I’m into yuri, my chances for love would drop. By the way, I’m into Rikka now.”

“You’ve turned into a rival?! Your chances are slim now!”

“Heh heh heh, that’s just a forbidden love story anyway. But that type of love does exist.”

“... Well, I’m sure that type of love is out there somewhere.”

“Heh heh heh, joking again. I can’t help joking when you’re asking such girly questions, Togashi-kun. You might have an inner princess!”

“What’s going on? I just wanted to know what kind of present to give and I get this?”

What an unacceptable present. I can’t tell her that I want to spend ages with Rikka until we can’t remember each other’s name. That’d definitely prevent me from getting a normal response.

“Well, I’m just joking with you. It’s funny to picture you as a girl. Let’s see, for a one month anniversary....”

“A one month anniversary?! Hahaha! You’re definitely an idiot, aren’t you?”

A voice suddenly cut off Kazari-chan’s response. It was Shinka Nibutani. Looking back, she was staring down at us with her usual sadistic smile and holding her tray.

Unlike Rikka and Kazari-chan, Nibutani wore her cardigan around her waist, giving her a rough look. With her hair pinned back with a summer-style hairclip, she gave off a classy air as she towered over us. I was reminded of the word Chantilly I heard earlier. This class rep, who was also part of the dance team, had a cool and intellectual vibe. I almost want to be in her shoes.

Then again, I have no desire to be a class rep.

“Oh, Shinka? What are you doing here?”

“Well, it’s not often I see you two together, so I was curious what you guys were talking about. I have to say, it was quite an interesting conversation. I couldn’t help laughing.”

Once again, she looked at me and started smiling like she was about to laugh again. Damn you... Why did she have to be listening in on us?

“Ah, is this seat empty? Mind if I sit until Chinatsu and Natsuno get here? Ah, pardon the interruption.”

“Are you trying to say you don’t have anything else to do?!”

“Shut up Geruzoniansasu.”

“Don’t call me that!”

Ignoring my outburst, Nibutani sat down in front of me. On her tray, I could see she had a salad loaded with veggies, a fruit sandwich, and some P○kky. Quite a girlish lunch, I supposed.

You know, if someone looked at all three of us here, I suppose they might think I've got a harem. Not just that, I've got the top two of our cutest in the class rankings too. I wonder if people are thinking that. Could they be spreading some rumor about me eating with the popular clique? I'm sure Isshiki would come after me if he saw this scene. Well, there's no need to worry.

After all, the only girl I love is Rikka.

"Heh heh, so go on. Continue this one month anniversary story."

That smirk you could hear was Nibutani taunting me. I'm not sure how much of her smile I could take. I don't really want her to hear about this, but if I'm going to find an answer for what present to give, I guess she's got to listen. Serious time!

"Since it'll be one month since Rikka and I met, don't you think I should get her a present? I've heard stories about doing that. Well, you know, it's kind of a big moment, right?"

"Your idiocy is always entertaining. If you give her a present after one month, wouldn't she expect one every month? Could you afford to do that? Then, why not stop it before the first month?"

Nibutani was both surprising and depressing in her summary. The part where she was surprising, she was eating her sandwich.

"..." I understood what she was saying. Of course there's no way I could have enough money to buy Rikka a present every month of my life. No matter what job I took, there was no way I could afford that habit.

“Wait a sec. I think that getting a present for Rikka-chan would be a good idea. Maybe you could just give her one for this special day. After all, girls are weak towards presents. If that’s all you have to worry about, then shouldn’t it be alright to give her one?”

Playing the angel consoling me was Kazari-chan. I’m incredibly grateful for her kind words. My soul feels refreshed.

“Hmm, well, you have a point. It’d be nice to get a present, wouldn’t it?”

“Have you ever been given a present from a guy, Nibutani?” Throwing caution to the wind, I asked a question I wouldn’t normally think about asking. Heh, hopefully this throws her off edge.

Just like I thought, Nibutani was flustered and blushing. “Huh? No! I’ve not gotten one like that!”

“You haven’t? That’s a bit surprising. With how popular you are, I thought you would’ve gotten one before now. That’s odd.”

“What?! Right, that is odd!”

Yep. She’s flustered. She was waving her hands around in the air and panicking. No one could misinterpret this scene. Hmm, it’s not every day you get to see Nibutani act like this, but let’s stop before this goes any further.

“Ha ha ha! Shinka is also very entertaining! Well, that is really strange. Were you very different when you were in middle school?”

Nibutani instantly and forcefully replied: “I’m not talking about then!” She also shot daggers at Kazari-chan. Honestly, I’m curious if Nibutani’s hiding any dark history from her middle school days too. Whenever I asked, she’d always say that a blank history is good.

“Ah, sorry, sorry. But didn’t you say things like ‘Call me Mori-sama!’, ‘Leave it to the prodigy!’, and ‘I’ll break apart this good-for-nothing world.’?”

It was out in the open. I felt a little sorry for her after hearing that... Well, maybe it was more me regretting my own history.

“AGHHHHHHH! That’s... That’s... my secret past... my dark historyyyyy!”

I decided to comfort her. “Well, we all have something like that.” Since I was like her back then, I felt it was the right thing to do.

“Don’t say that to me! You’re the one who was a chuunibyou patient!”

“Oh, you were a patient once, Yuuta-kun? I see now. That’s why you wear that amusing black t-shirt!”

“Why does everyone know about that?!”

Hey, that t-shirt she’s talking about is pretty cool! It’s a “Light ☆ Speed” t-shirt I saw recently and had to have. I couldn’t resist wearing such a cool shirt. Nibutani wore a shirt recently that had “Friendship” on it.

“So Yuuta-kun was once a chuunibyou patient? Oh this is bringing back memories of that girl.”

“Alright, stop it there. End this story now. I don’t want my wounds to get any bigger than they are now.”

“Awww, it’s been so long since we’ve talked like this, Shinka. It’d be nice if we could chat about old times. Well, since we have to go back to our earlier conversation, how about Yuuta-kun tells us about the time he confessed to Rikka?”

“That’s more like a change of topic than going back to what we were talking about!”

Of course I had to turn that down. But Nibutani had me in her sights and wasn’t going to let me get away.

"I've been curious about that too. Since I helped you out during our class trip, I should know about this, right?" Nibutani's triumphant smile showed broadly.

"Damn... I owe you one... But..."

"The ultimate dark magic..."

"Ah! I got it! I'll talk! For helping me out, I'll tell you what I said. Well... it was the usual... I love you.... I want to spend my whole life beside you... Something like that..."

This... this is embarrassing! My face is red... I'm sure my ears are feeling the blush this time...

"Oooh! That was nice! It was just like that when I was confessed to! The actions are important, but the words themselves are just as important. Right, Shinka?"

"They are. 'I don't dislike you,' eternal vows, eternal connections. Would I like confessions like that?"

"..." Eternal connections? I began thinking about this extraordinary term that just came out. Kazari-chan touched my elbow and asked softly, "What does she mean by eternal connections?" She began to smile too.

I too tried to reply softly so Nibutani couldn't hear. "Well, what are they?" Kazari-chan's shoulders began shaking like she was trying not to laugh. I too was trying to hold it in.

"Eternal Connections." Yeah, that's definitely something someone with chuunibyou would say. I'm sure they'd be written in some strange characters with the meaning off to the side. Something really fun has come up! Or rather, Nibutani said something that a patient with evil-eye chuunibyou would say. She was infected like I was, wasn't she?

“Yeah! Something like “I’ll always be connected with you for eternity” would be nice! I really think it’d be a great confession!”

I added a nod for emphasis! Damn it, how long can I hold this in? Take deep breaths...

“Heh heh heh, you should’ve confessed like that. Saying something along those lines would’ve been soooo cool!”

“Ye.....” I couldn’t hold it anymore. The laughter came out.

Nibutani started blinking her eyes and blushing with embarrassment as she finally realized what she had said. In a flash, her entire face was red.

“Wait... um... hold it!”

Kazari-chan could only smile and reply “Hahaha, Eternal Connections!”

She could only be a goddess. No one else could stand up to Nibutani like this and knock her down.

Nibutani started to tear up. “That’s... that’s not what I meant!”

After seeing a new portion of Nibutani’s dark history, our three-person conversation came to an end. Nibutani headed off to her club, Kazari-chan said she had things to do, and I went back to the classroom to get my things and head home. I was going to prepare for tomorrow’s date.

Or that’s what was supposed to happen. Before I could get past the gates, Nibutani, who was supposed to be at her club, stopped and properly threatened me.

“If you say anything about that, I’ll kill you.”

Of course, I could only smile and reply one way, “I promise I won’t say a thing since I’m eternally connected with you.” I then went outside the gate. I heard her yell “You idiot!” from behind me, but I just ignored her.



Chapter 2 : Our First Date on Our One Month Anniversary

It was Sunday at 10 AM. On the day of our date, we were set to meet in front of Rikka's apartment. After spotting me, Rikka instantly ran over, sporting a smile that was three times cuter than usual. Of course, she had to yell out some mystical phrase. "Yuuta! Good morning Water Dragon!"

"Is that supposed to be cool?! Aren't real water dragons reptiles like iguanas? So I'm an iguana now... right?"

It was the usual comedy routine to start the day. I can't say anything was out of the ordinary.

"Did I keep you waiting?"

"Nah, I just got here myself." That was a bit of a fib. I don't want to lie to her, but there was no way that I was going to be late on my first date.

"Umm, you look cool today. I mean your clothes do!" I couldn't look her in the eye and say that. It's too nerve-wracking. I'd lose myself in those eyes.

"Oh yeah! I tried to look as cool as I could!" Seems Rikka took my compliment as intended. I gave her a slightly flushed smile in return.

Today Rikka was dressed in date attire. It was flashy, but somehow rough at the same time. There was one thing that drew my attention more than anything else: Her black plaid miniskirt that lay against her legs. Yes, it looked cool yet cute on her, but there was something that bothered me. Why couldn't it be the kind that could possibly give me a free look? Oh well, not something that matters a lot.

Above the skirt, keeping with her black theme, was a black t-shirt and a black shoulder bag. Of course, everything had to match. She wore her usual bandages on her left arm, but today the Devilish Truth Stare was shining brightly.

As for unusual attire, she wore two ribbons in her hair. I can't put into words how cute she looked with those twin ribbons.

Regardless of anything else, there is one thing I can say: She's the cutest girl in the world!!!

"Yuuta. Where will we go today?" No "thank you" ... I'm disappointed, but it is Rikka after all.

"Well, I'll keep that a secret until we get there. Um, we'll be going on my bike. Is that all right with you?"

As I told her the plan for today, I pointed at my bike. It was an ordinary ladies' bike. Ah, but I did remodel it a bit for today. I added a cushion on the back. Now you can tell that it was meant for two.

Of course, Rikka had to exaggeratedly point at it. "Is... that your dragon vehicle?! What's its name?"

"I haven't named it yet. I'm still thinking of one."

"Then I'll name it..."

Before she could finish that sentence, I interrupted her.

"Hold on a moment. I want to wait a little bit." I didn't plan to say it like that, but it just came out. Rikka looked at me with doubt.

"Why?"

"I'll tell you later. What were we talking about? Oh yeah, let's get going!"

"You did mention that. Understood."

As soon as I said we were going, she sat like a little doll on the back of my bike. With just one glance, I could tell she was trying to rush me.

I straddled my bike, put my bag in the basket in front, and prepared to leave. "If there are no problems, let's get out of here!"

"Demon King Transportation Method unleashed. Passenger Stations Docked. All green, Yuuta. GO!"

"..." I was so nervous I couldn't even retort to that, though I could think of plenty of comebacks. It felt like my future had a caution light blinking in front of it.

As if she saw the lights too, Rikka put her arms around me and held tight. It's been a while since I've ridden double on a bike. Though the added weight isn't a factor, the difference in atmosphere is immense. I was ordinarily... nah, never mind. This is very pleasant.

We were like a real couple, with all the stress that involves.

"Alright, time to head out!" I pushed down the pedal, stood up and started to ride. I was able to keep a rapid pace for a little while, but I was starting to tire when I heard a song behind me.

"Go! Go! To Heaven!"

She's making a fool of herself. I tried to change this melody into one with some energy.

"That's cool, but I don't think we're heading there today."

"Oh? Go! Go! In the Inferno!"

"Why'd you choose the opposite location?!" I should've seen that one coming. Honestly, I don't want to visit Hell today either.

Well, at least Rikka seemed to be in a good mood with how she was humming. It made me happy to see her happy.

"Oh... I hope that seat isn't uncomfortable for you."

“No problem. The seat is favorable, though the view is unsatisfactory.”

“Please try to put up with the view. As long as I’m careful pedaling, we’ll be alright.”

“I’m fine. If Yuuta dies, then I too will die.”

... What was that?

It was like something Kazari-chan would say. Due to the stress I was under today, I couldn’t retort back. But what do you say to that? I’m happy to hear her say that, but not in that fashion! After a bit of hesitation, I replied,

“No, no matter what happens, I’ll be sure to protect you Rikka! If we happen to see a Demon King, I’ll be sure to defeat him!”

I decided to play the cool card. Best not to try and make her laugh, but at least that should get a smile.

I expected to hear something like, “Naturally, you are my contractee after all,” but I didn’t hear anything from Rikka. Usually she’d respond to something like that, but what’s going on...? I couldn’t see her reaction, so not hearing something was a little heartbreaking.

“Um, Rikka-san?”

“... Yeah, protect me.” After barely mumbling that, Rikka pressed her forehead into my back.

Uh huh, looks like the tables are turned. She’s the embarrassed one this time...

Though I was happy to hear her embarrassed reply, we continued on our journey in silence. Noticing the heavy atmosphere, I began to pedal faster. But it didn’t matter how fast I went because there was a red light in front of me.

When it rains, it pours.

The one to break the ice was Rikka.

“But Yuuta is the Demon King, so your opponent would be something like a magic girl. You versus a heroic magical girl.”

By the time I could say something, the light had turned green. I kicked the ground and began to pedal the bike as I replied.

“That bit at the end is messed up but... facing a hero would be something new. Well, as long as we’re not in a game. If we’re in a game, the heroes always win.”

“That isn’t the case. I’ll be by your side. Our powers are the strongest, so there is no chance of losing.”

“Hahaha, definitely. You really hate to lose, so we’d definitely win.”

Rikka said decisively, “Naturally. Of course, I’m also quite strong by myself.”

I couldn’t see her face, but I’m sure she was ecstatic behind me.

“That reminds me. I haven’t seen you use the Devilish Truth Stare recently. Well, granted it’s shining bright today, but is there a reason behind that?”

“That is not true. The Devilish Truth Stare is always invoked. Right now it is allowing me to read into Yuuta’s heart.”

“That’s the first time I’ve heard of such a power! I don’t think I would care for that!”

“I see your heart saying ‘Whoaaaaaa, I’m crossing over the speed of sound! This is ‘Yuuta-style Lightning Fast Sonic Speed!!!’”

“Saying it like that is really frustrating. Not naming it something like ‘Yuuta-style Final Heaven’ (which is closer to my naming style) is super frustrating, but I wouldn’t even say something like that. I wouldn’t even think it!”

“How, how did it know?! Has the Devilish Truth Stare surpassed my expectations?!”

“Seriously, you’re not reading my heart.”

When it comes to being cheeky, you are the strongest. But she doesn’t miss a beat.

“Humph. Calm yourself. This ability is restricted, thus I do not use it often. From hence forth, I’ll only use it when I tell you.”

“You mean you couldn’t just ask...”

“Oh no! It really is the strongest power!”

“Well, I can’t deny that...”

“By the way, we’ve been traveling for a while. Where are we going today?”

And just like that, Rikka changed the subject on me. I regret stopping our interesting conversation, but perhaps she’s getting uneasy not knowing our plans for today. We’ll be there soon, so I guess I can surprise her.

“So Rikka, do you like dolphins?”

“I love Kairu-kun!”

“Kairu-kun ? Ah, so you’re one of those folks who don’t click on the ‘hide mascot’ button in Office? I’m not talking about him; I mean a real dolphin! Wouldn’t it be nice to sit on the edge and see one up close? You could even see sharks too.”

“Mmmm, I love how those taste.”

“...Well, to each their own... So we’re heading to the aquarium now.”

“Oh, the aquarium! I’ve never been to one before.”

That was a surprising response. I thought everyone went to one in elementary school as a field trip, but I guess not. On the bright side, at least today should be even more fun.

“Then is this all right with you? We’ve only got today this week to go, so I thought it’d be a good idea.”

“To the Aquarium ~!”

Behind me, I hear Rikka begin to sing again in joy. My worries instantly disappeared. I began to pedal my bike—or my dragon vehicle in Rikka-terms—as fast as I could go.

I began reviewing our date plans in my head as I continued to pedal. After our hour-long trip, we had finally arrived at the aquarium.

The aquarium was located near the coast, so there was a small breeze to take care of the heat today. It felt really nice. Since it was Sunday, there were a lot of parents with their children and couples there.

We began to search for a place to park my bike. Of course, my attention was solely focused on finding somewhere proper to lock it. I couldn’t illegally park it; the trauma from the bike mansion was still fresh in my mind.

After that, we began to walk towards the coast. We had arrived a little later than I planned, but it was lunch time. Thankfully, this too was planned ahead of time.

I sat down on a bench and asked Rikka, “So, why don’t we eat before we head inside?”

Rikka sat down beside me. “Did you bring lunch Yuuta?”

“Of course! I spent a lot of time on today’s masterpiece! Take a look at this apple pie!” I reached behind me to show said apple pie, but there was no bag there.

... Damn it! Maybe I put my bag in my basket on the bike... I was feeling stressed, so maybe it slipped my mind that I put it in there.

“Sorry, I left my bag in the bike. Do you mind waiting here?”

“Unsurprisingly it is located there currently. Understood. I shall wait here.”

“Did you know I left it?! You could’ve told me earlier... Oh well, I’ll be back in a flash!”

I ran at full speed towards the bike storage area. My wallet was also in that bag, so if it’s lost... I don’t want to think about that. Our first date would end disastrously and it’d be my fault. I’d probably feel like dying on the spot.

I quickly reached the storage area and found my bike. Thankfully, my bag was in the basket. For the time being, this date won’t end as a horror story.

As I picked up my bag and headed back towards Rikka, I heard my cell phone shake. When I took it out, I saw someone had sent me a text. Must be Rikka.

Or so I thought. Surprisingly, the sender was Kazari-chan.

“The first date...is a test from God. But you’ll be fine. Use your eternal connections with Rikka-chan to guide you Togashi-kun. Don’t worry and you’ll do well!”

This was quite the interesting message. Or did Kazari-chan just want to send something saying “eternal connection?”

I couldn't help laughing at Kazari-chan, or no, Nibutani's saying. Thanks to her, I was able to calm down. I sent a brief reply to thank Kazari-chan and quickly headed back to Rikka.

I dashed all the way back, where she was waiting. At that time, my stress was gone. Kazari-chan's actions had borne fruit.

Calmly I took in the scene in front of me.

"That's..."

In front of me was Rikka and... a guy I've never seen before. I can attest that he was older than I was. This tall, slender guy was sitting beside Rikka of all people.

I got the sense he was pretty gaudy. He looked just like one of those guys you'd see in the movies. This guy has to be... a pickup artist. Once again, I dashed over as fast as I could.

"Heh, do you have some free time Rikka-chan? Want to go on the ferris wheel?"

How dare he say something like that to her! I can't believe it!

"Hey!" I forced my way into their conversation.

"What? Are you trying to interrupt us?" Gaudy replied flippantly, sneering. He was looking up at me, but I wasn't going to let him win one over on me. I scowled back at him.

"Well, I'm her boyfriend so..."

"Ha ha, the boyfriend's arrived, huh? Or are you really her boyfriend? I just wanted to go on a date with Rikka-chan here. Move aside, will ya?"

He sounded even more flippant this time, but I wasn't going to give in. I responded with a pointed glare, "We are in a relationship. I'm on a date with her now, so no, I won't move. Please return her to me!"

I hoped shouting would put an end to this, but it looked like it had the opposite effect on Gaudy.

"No no no, man. You're going away."

The gap between us shortened. Rikka was... I could faintly see her shivering behind this guy. Naturally. If a guy she didn't know came up and started chatting her up, she'd obviously get like this.

Damn, I screwed up. If I hadn't forgotten my bag, this wouldn't have happened...

This was dangerous. I said that I had flames of darkness before, but I had never been in a fight. If the time came, I figured I'd have what it took. But, as you'd expect, I was full of myself. I don't have that capability. I know that now, but what should I do?

What should I do in this situation...

Well, I only have one option left!

I yelled as loud as I could.

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHH! There's a pervert over here! Someone save us!"

I cried out in the best girl's voice I had. This was the best idea that I could come up with, but man, it made me feel incredibly pitiful. Thankfully, it had an immediate effect on Gaudy.

"Humph. Damn you!" While he was saying that, he slipped away in the confusion.

I looked around and there were a lot of people surrounding us. Oh, so he got away then. It was the best thing I could think of, but at least it gave us a great result.

Once everyone was gone I sat down beside Rikka again. "Sorry... Are you alright?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. I was just startled. He suddenly started talking to me." With what happened, I can believe she was startled. Thank goodness...

"Did anything bad happen?"

"I'm alright. Nothing happened."

"I see. That's good. Guess that happens when you're the cutest girl in the world..." Of course, I had to blush when I said that. Damn, don't get started now...

After saying that, Rikka also started to blush as she replied. "... Th, Thank you. But you looked really cool as you acted like a girl! You were able to invoke a new ability!"

Ugh, though I don't want to say "Thank you very much," I guess I'll just say "Thanks!"

Or not! How could I thank some weird compliment like that?!

"Ah, um... Thanks, I guess... But didn't that guy call you Rikka-chan? Did you tell him your full name?"

"... I'm very sorry. He asked about my name and then about where I went to school. I answered him." Rikka sounded down. She looked like she was thinking about what she did.

Well, if we look at the cause of the matter, it was me forgetting my bag. Rikka isn't to blame for this happening.

"I see, I see. Well, everything's fine. We'll never see that guy again as long as you didn't tell him something like your phone number or where you live. Enough about him, I forgot about lunch. Are you ready to eat?"

"Yes, I'm hungry."

I set down my bag and then pulled out a plastic container for her to see. Since it was our first date, I was psyched last night, so I woke up early and baked this apple pie. I put all my fighting spirit into making this pie and left half behind for my sisters at home.

Rikka spoke with wonder as she saw it. "OH! Did you really make this by yourself?"

"Well, I did my best. I followed a recipe, so I can't really say I made it all by myself. Granted, it does make a delicious pie."

"I knew you could do it! Is it alright to eat?" She didn't even wait to finish that question before grabbing a slice of the pie. After saying thanks, she stuck it in her tiny mouth. I could see her expression indicating how delicious it was as she chewed. She had no hint of being affected by that flirt anymore. I began to calm down.

"Ah, I didn't bring a handkerchief. It'll be fine though. So, how is it? Delicious?"

"Yes! It's del... ough ough" Rikka was eating so fast that she choked on the wrapping underneath the cake.

Oh well. I shrugged and got my canteen from my bag. Naturally, today's tea was fit for summer. It was barley tea. I poured some into a glass and handed it over to Rikka, who gulped it down quickly.

"I thought I was going to die... It was delicious."

"Huh..." I'm happy to hear that, but not after that first part.

“The pie was sweet, which made it delicious. The tea also was very tasty.”

“Oh, I see. Don’t eat so fast from now on!”

Since the mood was back to normal, I also grabbed a piece of my pie. Just like the recipe said, it was delicious. I’m sure my family won’t mind eating a slice or two. Good. Before I knew it, the pie was all gone. We had eaten it in a matter of minutes.

“Thanks for the food. Yuuta. Make another one sometime!”

“Alright, sometime later. Since our tests start tomorrow, I’ll make one to congratulate you for good grades.”

“Ooh... Tests... I don’t think I could pass anything but Japanese.”

“Well, you’ve been reviewing math with me every day, so I think we’ll be able to manage that. Everything else... Well, English really scares me.”

“Will we have study sessions again if I have to re-take one...”

“Of course we would, so don’t worry about it! We’ll study everyday again if we have to.”

“Yeah...” Though she nodded, her reply didn’t sound as enthusiastic. We’d be able to compare answers shortly after the test, so hopefully she wouldn’t write anything off the wall. Secretly, I was calm. Not because I knew what her grade would be, but because I wouldn’t have to see that illusionary grade again. Well, as long as she remembers to write her name.

“Well, we’ll worry about that when we get our tests back. For now, why don’t we head inside?”

“Yeah!” This time her reply wasn’t as half-hearted. She was eager to go inside. Coupled with a bright smile, it filled my heart with joy.

We stood up and began to walk towards the aquarium entrance. From the outside, it looked like one of the largest aquariums in the world. With just how tall the entrance was, it certainly looked world-class.

We went in without delay. The tickets weren't cheap, but I suppose going to see a movie would cost about the same. Since I invited her, I said I would pay, but Rikka gently declined and paid. "It's alright. I wanted to meet Kairu-kun No. 2, so you don't have to pay."

The difference between inside and outside was astounding. There was hardly anyone inside. The cool air from the air conditioning helped relieve us from the heat outside. Without saying anything, we moved on. Rikka was going everywhere, trying to see everything around her.

Since we were in a different place and together, my nervousness started to return. Rikka also had a nervous expression as she was looking around. Of course she and I wouldn't want to talk about it.

"Look at all the fish! It's like you're in the middle of the ocean."

"Do you like fish, Yuuta?"

"I wouldn't say I like fish, but rather I really like the sea. I've wanted to explore the sea since I was a child. I probably saw some movie or TV show about it and got hooked."

"Yuuta uses the flames of darkness, yet likes water... Could he have had this much potential since he was a child?"

"Well, that's kinda how it went. I wouldn't call myself a prodigy though. Besides, it's the sea I like, not just water itself. I like how it just makes my body feel lighter."

"I understand what you're saying. I too immensely like the sea. Ah, let's go to the sea today!"

“Huh? Are you serious?” Suddenly the possibility of seeing her in a swimsuit dramatically increased. Inside, I was sporting a triumphant pose, but outside, we just went into a tunnel surrounded by tanks.

“... Amazing. Is this a gate to the demon world?” That was certainly a Rikka-ish thought. I couldn’t help laughing as I replied.

“Well, you might think that. Perhaps the fish look like ghosts. I can’t check, but maybe some of the fish have magical powers.”

Maybe they do, but that wouldn’t be weird. Lately, probably thanks to Rikka, those types of thoughts have been coming into my head more frequently. Well, they were already there previously if I recall how I acted in the past, but I’d say that Rikka’s been a big influence in their return.

Naturally, I don’t mind them coming back. It’s been more fun lately, thanks to her being around. That’s why I don’t think having chuunibyou is necessarily a bad thing. People with it just see things in a different light. It’s not just objects; they also have the talent to perceive other things differently too. Not sure if you could really call it a talent, though.

“That tunnel was pretty amazing, wasn’t it?”

“Not as cool as Kairu-kun No. 2! Let’s go Yuuta!”

As Rikka was rushing me, our fingertips unexpectedly touched. Our hands and souls touched each other. Well, this might be out of the ordinary, but we *are* on a date...

And so, I took Rikka’s hand into my right. It was the normal style, as if I was taking her somewhere.

“Um... your hand, is it alright?” I was so nervous that my ability to speak was slipping. We couldn’t look at each other either.

Rikka could only reply in a barely-audible voice, “Yeah.” She let go of my hand, and then reclasped hers to mine. This time, it looked like we were a couple.

“It is the primary responsibility of the contractee to hold hands with the contractor. Strangely enough, we have not held hands once.”

“Is that so? Well, I did want to hold your hand for a while.”

“Yes. I also wanted to connect us.”

“That reminds me, this is the first time I’ve held hands with someone isn’t it? It’s a bit nerve-wracking.”

“We’ll hold hands more often from now. I promise not to transmit any powers to you via my hands. There will be no demonstrations of the Devilish Truth Stare’s capabilities.”

“You’re not going to steal my life energy... are you?” Is it just me, or am I feeling tired all of a sudden? Nah, it’s probably my nervousness from holding her hand.

It took guts to start holding hands with Rikka, and it took guts for her to return the favor. She’d say that as a contractee, it’s up to me to give her strength. Of course, she’d claim that with her usual smile, but she doesn’t need to say anything. We’re already tied together! There’s nothing to be nervous about!

“Well, let’s head to the part of the aquarium you called the ‘demon area’!”

“Yeah! To the Demon Area!”

As we were riding the long escalator up, I was thankful there was no one around to hear our conversation. They might think we’re some strange chuunibyou couple.

After that, we spent about three hours talking like fools. If our friends could see us, I'm sure they'd pretend not to know who we were, but it was certainly a lot of fun at the aquarium.

Somehow the fish just seemed to be attracted to Rikka. While I looked at the fish swimming around, suddenly a lot of children gathered around her. Since all the children were excited to be in the aquarium, Rikka was able to play with them.

Rikka was so excited when she saw a real Kairu for the first time. She asked me "Is there a way for this Kairu to disappear?" At the penguin exhibit, she always knew when one would jump out of its tank and take a picture. Upon asking, she just smiled mysteriously and commented, "Perhaps it's ESP awakening in me?"

I was surprised to see an actual water dragon there. The mola mola were good for nothing, but she was amazed at the shark exhibit. The amount of jellyfish there was astounding too.

I was a little worried about taking her here, but I was glad that that we had fun like I thought we would. I'm really glad she came with me today.

Before long we were at the exit. It was a lot of fun, but the time had come for us to leave.

Suddenly, Rikka asked something. "Why did you pick the aquarium, Yuuta?"

"Hmm, it just came to me, but now that I think about it, I think I might've been influenced by something. It's a bit embarrassing, so I don't want to say what it was... Basically, something gave me this idea to go on a date at the aquarium, and I wanted to fulfill it."

That something was probably some manga. Maybe it was just so fun that I had fond memories of it and wanted us to do something like that?

“Oh.” Rikka gave a short reply, but nodded like she was satisfied with the answer. “It was really fun. I want to come again. But tomorrow...”

“Tomorrow?!”

“Well, as long as I’m with you, any time would be alright.” At the same time those words reached my ear, we had just moved from darkness into light. Of the building, that is.

“Then how about we come here once a year? We’ll be able to see if Kairu-kun No. 2 is doing well. We won’t know how he’s doing unless we come.”

“Yeah!”

And with that, our date at the aquarium ended. Needless to say, it was a date I’ll remember.



“Well, we’re not done yet!”

Right after we had left the aquarium, I was walking beside Rikka. It’s true. After part one of our date plans was completed, there remained part two. In case Rikka didn’t have fun at the aquarium, I wanted to have insurance if we had some time left.

“What shall we do? Go on that Ferris Wheel?” She was talking about the big Ferris Wheel that was across from the aquarium.

“Alas, we shall not be embarking on that Ferris Wheel. Sorry.”

“What?” It doesn’t matter how disappointed you look, we’re not getting on it. Well, to be correct, I’m not getting on it. Heights are scary....

“Well, maybe another time.” I didn’t want to deceive her, but we had to leave. In order to get her to leave, I tugged on her hand and the downhearted Rikka followed behind me. I wanted to take my time so I wouldn’t rush her, but we didn’t have a lot of spare time.

We quickly head to the bike storage area and I pulled my bike out and prepared it for travel.

“Well, we’ve got to get out of here. Would you kindly sit behind me?”

“There is no other option currently, but next time we will go on that Ferris Wheel.”

“... Understood.” Will my fear of heights be cured by then?

But it looks like that bad premonition I had about going on a first date at an amusement park was misguided. That was probably why I subconsciously chose the aquarium. Rikka does love roller coasters... I’ll keep thinking about that.

We left for our next destination ... which was a big park located quite close to the aquarium.

“Alright, this spot should be good enough.” I stopped my bike by the edge after inspecting the grounds. It was 16:00, so there weren’t a lot of people in the park.

“What are we doing next?”

“Umm... Oh, that was it. Searching for new powers... right?”

Rikka looked a bit puzzled, but she instantly understood what I meant and began clapping her hands. “I understand. Taming that dragon, right?”

“To do that, you’ll have to use a restricted finishing move!” Well, I did dress this way so that no one would know what we were doing or where we were from. If this leaked out, it wouldn’t be funny, and she could be incredibly embarrassed.

I had promised to do this earlier, but I wasn’t able to fulfill it on the day of our field trip. Thus, I thought this would be the right place and time to fulfill it. When she said we’d search for a new power, I thought this could work.

“Remember back then when you weren’t able to tame that dragon vehicle? I thought we could do that together on our date.”

“...I’m so happy you didn’t forget about it. Yes! I too will tame that dragon! Afterwards, we will conquer the Earth together!”

... What kind of journey would I have to embark on so we could conquer Earth by bicycle? Well, perhaps there is one out there. I didn’t search for a place like this after all.

“Let’s start by getting on the vehicle!”

“Ah, wait a second.” Rikka moved the saddle to the lowest point it could go. After checking its stability, she got on the saddle. With such a short skirt, I’m worried where my eyes might wander to...

“Devilish Truth Stare! Dragon Dance!”

“Well, you have to move the stand or else it won’t be able to move...”

“How can I do that, Yuuta...?”

“Don’t look so frightened as you get on it... I can’t really say, you just move it once you get on. You can’t move with it up. Stands are quite good at supporting the vehicle.”

“Understood.” She gently moved the stand propping the bike up. From here, we should practice keeping her balance on the bike.

“Now keep your feet on the pedals and rotate them while keeping your balance. Don’t worry, I’ll support you so you won’t fall.”

“Understood. I trust you.” She began to pedal. It was a bit wobbly to begin with, but soon she was able to pedal well.

“Oh, you’re doing great! Good job!”

“It’s like my Devilish Truth Stare has begun to tame this dragon! Heh heh, before long, your dragon will soon become mine.”

“Well, you say that now. Are you ready to ride alone? Is it alright for me to stop now?”

“I! Trust! You!” You trust me so much you don’t want to separate, huh? But if she wants to ride a bike, I’ll have to betray her at some point.

“Alright, I trust you. I won’t let go. Be sure to turn the handlebar when we reach that curve!”

“I have to fly this dragon?!”

“It’s nothing to be that shocked over! You can fly it.” It probably looked like we were in a play. Of course, we weren’t actually acting.

I’m a trustworthy guy. I feel awful every time I have to break a promise but, in order to get Rikka to learn to ride a bike quickly, I had to lie. It was a white lie, but I hope she wouldn’t press me on it.

Soon, Rikka was taming the dragon all by herself.

“Huh?”

“Well, I had to let go.”

“What, what? Whawha?” As soon as she realized she was riding by herself, Rikka became flustered (and a little cute) when raising her voice. She began to get wobbly again.

Cute wasn't the only thing I was paying attention to. Yeah, looks like I was a bit too early in letting her go. From the looks of things, I had to restrain the uneasy Rikka.

“Rikka! Calm down! You can do it! Braaaaaaaaaaaaaake!” I tried to calm her down.

After listening to what I was saying, I heard the squealing of Rikka Transit applying the brakes. There she stood still.

“Whoa, that was scary!”

“Sorry, sorry, I had to lie. Well, don't you feel like you can ride now?”

“Really?”

“Really! Don't you think you can do it?” Upon hearing my praise, Rikka got a triumphant look on her face. Rikka is the type of girl who enjoys being praised. Secretly, I think her parents know about that too.

“Let's train some more!”

“Okay. I'll be beside you so you won't feel in danger. That should ease your mind, right?”

After an hour of training, Rikka grew to become a full dragon tamer. In normal terms, she can ride a bicycle now.

“Yep, I think you've got the hang of it now.”

“This is all thanks to you Yuuta. Thank you.”

“Well, you're the one who was able to ride it.”

“No, if you weren’t here, I don’t think I would be able to make that dragon my underling. That’s why it’s all thanks to you. Again, thank you.”

“Is that so? Well, if you put it like that, you’re quite welcome. Well, since you’re the one who was able to tame him, why don’t you name him to celebrate?”

“Ah, so that’s why you said that earlier!”

“Yeah.”

I had a hunch that Rikka would become attached once she rode it. Not much of a present, but I think she likes it. Rikka got on the bike and began thinking.

“Hmm, wait a moment.”

“That’s strange. Usually, you have a name already picked out.”

“But this is the first dragon I could name.” It’s just like her to value that. She then added. “This boy is named Anteros No. 2.”

“Then No. 1 was... that?” Number 1 was the two-person bike we rode on the day of the class trip. Those memories came rushing back into my head. I spent a lot of time running around that day.

“I was quite pleased with naming that one No. 1, so this boy is No. 2.”

“It’s really great. It’s so cool, I love it!”

“Is that so? Good.” Rikka’s smile had no worries at all in it. It was enchanting.

“Alright, now that he’s named, we have to head home. Let’s go, Anteros No. 2!”



After that, we had more foolish conversations on the way back. I'm not sure if Anteros No. 2 leveled up or what, but even though I was worn out, we came back at about the same speed we had when going to the aquarium. Soon we arrived at Rikka's apartment.

"We have arrived." As soon as I heard her say that from behind me, I put on the brakes and stopped precisely in front of her apartment.

"Thank you for your efforts." After getting off of Anteros No. 2, Rikka lowered her head and graciously thanked me. I too lowered my head back. We were together the whole day, and because of that we had fun.

"The same to you." It was a bit awkward, but I didn't want to leave. After we stop this give and take, it marks the end of our happy day. It felt like the world would end.

I could be with Rikka and it'd be alright. Wow, that sounded chuunibyoush. The awkwardness grew. It's not a bad thing to be awkward, but it wouldn't go away today.

"Today was so much fun! It feels weird to thank you, but I feel like I should."

"I too had a lot of fun! I'm really happy."

Really happy.

That phrase fills my entire soul with joy. I also felt insanely happy when I was with Rikka today. I wanted to tell her. I wanted to say it from the bottom of my heart.

"..."

“ ... ”

Apparently, Rikka was finding it as difficult as I was to say goodbye. Our eyes continued to gaze into each other's. Silence swooped down around us. The half-full moon illuminated us from the night sky.

Rikka broke our silence in a small voice. “Yuuta, this could be a sign of goblins.” She grabbed my hand and took me to a back alley. There she took a deep breath, and sighed slowly. She looked towards me and shut her eyes.

“Yuuta, show proof of our contract.”

“Huh?” I didn't understand what she meant. It didn't feel right to ask her again.

After a little while, Rikka opened her eyes a bit, contemptuously.

“On that day, we proved we made a contract together. It would be nice to prove it again tonight, Yuuta.” She started to pout. It was so adorable, yet shy at the same time.

Finally, it hit me what she meant. I'm an idiot. Go ahead and say it: I have no common sense when it comes to love. I'm really an idiot...

“Sorry, I was being idiotic.”

“Yes, you're certainly an idiot.”

“Yes, yes, sorry. But isn't the one who says that an idiot too. That makes you one.”

“ ... Idiot.”

“Rikka.”

“Huh?”

“I love you.” Our lips met.

The second kiss of my life lasted about ten seconds, but it felt like an hour had passed when we parted. The only sensation I felt was Rikka's presence on my lips. It felt like we were alone in the world. I wished we could stay like that forever.

It was pure happiness. Neither of us moved. It was the best feeling in the world.

After our lips separated, Rikka opened her eyes. "I love you too." Again, she had such a charming smile.

And like that, our first date, the date to celebrate one month together, ended. It was the best day ever.

Chapter 3 : “Well, if it isn’t Hero?”

Monday, the day after our date, had come. I was on my way to school when suddenly a punch hit me from behind. “Good morning fraud!” Of all people, it was Nibutani delivering a surprise greeting. Apparently, just having a sadistic appearance wasn’t enough; she was starting to develop sadistic conduct as well.

Nibutani came up next to me and started chatting nonchalantly. “What? You look like you’re going to say ‘That hurt! Die!’ I didn’t even hit you as hard as I could. Come on now, say ‘Good Morning fraud’ too!”

“It’s not ‘looking like,’ it did hurt! I wasn’t expecting that! Who would expect a greeting like that in the morning?!”

“It’s morning, so how about calling it a ‘Light Strike’?”

“That’s an oxymoron!” A “Light Strike” huh? Sounds so radiant. Wonder if she’d use that version on someone directly facing her.

“Come on, your beloved classmate greeted you in the morning. There’s no need to get mad at me.”

“I wouldn’t be mad if that was an ordinary greeting.”

“Good morning!” Now there’s your ordinary greeting.

Uh, uh, I get the sense I should return the favor. “... Good Morning Water Dragon.”

“Whoa, what is that? That’s super chuunibyou-ish!”

“Shut up. You have no right to complain after your greeting.”

“Oh well. I’ll just take your good intentions.” Nibutani looked up to the sky. There wasn’t much difference in our heights, but she spoke as though she

was of higher rank than me. Feels like I'm some pitiful soldier telling a tale of woe.

"Um, was there anything you wanted from me? I'd like to go to school now." I completely went into wimp-mode. It felt like she was planning to take my lunch money from me.

"Do I have to have a reason? I got off of the train, started walking to school, and then I saw a friend in front of me. Is there a problem with calling out to a friend and greeting them?"

"Well, it's not really a problem but... friends don't hit each other on the back... It's more like a tap on the shoulder."

"Ah, so then we're not friends. If I strike a not-friend on the back, then it's a crime."

"It's a crime even if you did it to a friend!" That wasn't some grand proclamation of our friendship. Are we really friends at all...? "Nibutani, we're friends. Didn't you help me with my love life? If pressed, I'd say that you're a close female friend to me."

"Maybe an acquaintance..." She instantly betrayed me. I should ask if she's planning on becoming the third member of a love triangle with Rikka and myself. Maybe having to deny being a third wheel would get her to say she's a close friend.

"By the way, how did yesterday go?" Ah, finally, that sadistic smile had arrived. The whole "I wanted to hear how it went" question huh?

"It was a day of happiness thanks to you."

Nibutani put her fingers in her ears and replied "Whoa, too much praise! I don't want to hear anymore!"

If you were going to do that, then why did you ask in the first place? Let's just not comment about how you're only pretending not to hear what I say.

"So it went well. I thought you would've been dumped on the first date."

"Are you feeling bitter today or what?!" Is she holding a grudge against me? Then it came to me: the whole "Eternal Connections" incident. Hey, that wasn't my fault, you know!

"If you're going to talk like that, then I'll leave you to yourself."

"You've moved past bitter to vicious!" This is her revenge on someone who didn't say anything during that conversation! So scary! Someone save me! Why do I have to be the one to get the brunt of her anger this morning?

After a day in Heaven, am I going to have a day in Hell...?

"But, I don't want to be separated from you guys."

"Why the sudden change of heart?! How am I supposed to believe you after how you were talking a moment ago?"

I seriously don't get how she thinks. She'll change topics regardless of how things are going. Maybe I shouldn't have spoken back to her to start this conversation. Yesterday I was on a date with Rikka, who wasn't as puzzled as she usually is, so I suppose my retort gauge was full. Oh well, it doesn't matter.

"Hmm, you don't believe we're friends? How mean! Maybe I should break it off."

"You are a distant pal, aren't you?!" Another quick betrayal. She's the mean one here. If we're not friends, then I'll file charges for that assault earlier!

"Hahaha! You really like trying to make comebacks, don't you? I said I was joking about that. You wouldn't understand where I'm coming from, but what I said earlier was the truth. I wasn't lying."

“You mean that you don’t want to be separated?”

“Yes. I still want Takanashi-san to be cured, don’t I?”

“Cured? You still think... she could be cured?”

Nibutani believes that chuunibyou could be cured. Since I met Rikka, I’ve had the exact opposite feeling with regards to the illness.

I see it as a wonder. I can’t see my past as the dark history that Nibutani sees it as. Sure, it’s embarrassing and makes me feel like I’m in agony when it’s revealed, but I wouldn’t change it. While I wish the past me would have been more considerate of others, I can’t say that I wish I would’ve been ordinary. Now, I feel that chuunibyou is the best.

I thought so back then, and now I feel the same. It’s just kind of like that. Maybe chuunibyou is an amazing way to express yourself.

Thus, I couldn’t say anything to Nibutani. She continued to stare at me, and she spoke. “But you think it’s all right for her to be like you.”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

She rose her eyebrows in thought, then changed to a pensive expression. “I mean as she is right now. Oh yeah, I always just call you ‘you,’ don’t I? How about I call you Gerzoni?”

“I don’t get how you think at all, Mori-sama! Not one bit!”

... Again, I was struck. This time it was a surprise backhanded chop. It wasn’t enough for me to cry out, but it definitely hurt. Is this... a Light Attack?!

“Ugh... Wait a minute. Why was I at fault there? I even called you Nibutani before.... How long have you been someone who beats other people?”

“Huh? I didn’t beat you. That was just a rebuttal. Isn’t a closed fist a strike? Then open-handed is merely a rebuttal. Besides, my thumb was concealed, so that was a friendly rebuttal if I say so myself.”

“Is there a love rebuttal?!” I wouldn’t mind being rebuked by that. How can I stop this chain of idiocy from continuing? “Or um... I can’t say that I don’t care for them, but I’m not sure what a rebuttal means.”

Nibutani wasn’t entertained. She said with disdain, “You don’t know, huh?”

She raised her head and looked around. Appears our walk together had finished.

“I’m heading ahead. See you at school Ger-zo-ni!” The wind blew her hair as she left.

And then there was only me. She should really be more considerate of others, for goodness sake. She’s our class leader, so I should be grateful to her, but I wish she would act differently around me. She even changed what she calls me, too. Well, we’re friends, so it’s natural for us to use nicknames. But I hope it doesn’t catch on. I don’t really want to be called Gerzoniansu, but I think I could get used to being called Gerzoni.



“Now, it’s time to return your tests! For your knowledge, the average score was.....exactly 50! It’s a bit low; did everyone study for this one? Of course you should enjoy your high school life, but there’s times where you need to be married to your math textbooks. Those who failed will have supplementary lessons over summer break!”

Today's second period was math. Nana-chan was already on the podium, calling students to retrieve their answer sheets from the final we took the other day. Looking at the people who already got their sheets back, it was a dark day for our class.

Instead of alternating between joy and depression, the students who went up were just depressed and upset. The average was 50, huh... That's obviously really low. I'm starting to worry I might've done worse than I thought. And also... I hope Rikka did okay...

And then Rikka was called up. I could feel the tension as Rikka languidly stood up and walked to the podium. I was next. I took a deep breath and prepared to stand up.

"Takanashi-san, I'm very pleased....You did your best!" Nana-chan's voice bellowed throughout the small room. "Next, Togashi-kun."

As I stood up and walked towards the front of the classroom, I passed by Rikka, who was shaking with awe as she clutched her answer sheet to her chest. What did she get?

"Togashi-kun, I don't think it's too much for me to say this to you. Thanks."

"You... you're welcome."

"Yes, you were also able to do your best."

"Oh?" The answer sheet I got back had an 85 on it; considerably higher than the average. While it's a bit lower than my last grade, this is still pretty good!

But it looks like I had a lot of careless mistakes. I've got to fix those for the next one.

After being relieved at my grade, I turned around and started to head back to my seat when Rikka suddenly ran towards me. She was looking at me like she was about to file a complaint. I asked the most important question: “What did you get?”

“Yu... Yuuta... God granted me a miracle! Or perhaps I’m a god.”

“You were an inhabitant of the demon world, how could you be a god too?” A demon god... would be stronger than a demon king. Well, she is stronger than me in certain ways.

“So what did you get?”

“I forgot. Look!” Trembling, she handed her answer sheet over to me. I took a look and saw a miracle grade recorded. It was so miraculous compared to the last time and during her re-tests that—forgive me for being blunt—it was not something I expected to see this morning.

I was so shocked I couldn’t say anything. I was literally speechless. If I could speak, the only thing I could say would be “It’s a miracle.”

As you’d expect, Rikka had that triumphant expression you think she’d have when it came to a math grade. Her posture was a bit more humble. “Not too bad if I say so... Waitwait, this is amazing!”

“Hehe, you’re too kind.” Rikka shyly smiled.

Ah! Of course! There’s one phrase I can say that would complement her the most! “It’s the strongest!”

“Ahem! The strongest!” She placed her hand behind her back and stuck her chest out with pride. She was triumphant over this test.

No matter how many times I looked at her sheet, her grade stayed the same: a 41. A bit lower than the average, but it was still a passing grade. Well, a

just-barely passing grade. Maybe the best news was the “No supplementary classes needed” written on it.

Looking at the details on her sheet, there were few correct marks. I have a hunch Nana-chan gave her some special treatment, but I think she knows how much effort Rikka put into studying. You could say that effort paid off.

Looking at her full name, I noticed that she didn’t properly write it. “Um, what is this?”

“It’s the name I only use when I’m giving my full effort!”

“I don’t understand why you would only call yourself this when you’re serious! Well, what is this middle name?”

“Rikka U(nlimited) Takanashi.”

“You have no boundaries?!” How cool! Wait, does this mean she was restricting herself until now? You should always try to do your best, but oh well.

“I wonder if Nana-chan just ignored that like usual.”

“She wouldn’t do such a thing. Look at this comment: ‘Are you half-Japanese?’” Nana-chan really wrote that. Well, after seeing Rikka having two different eye colors, perhaps it’s natural for her to assume that when she saw a middle name.

“By the way, what did you get, Yuuta?”

“Ah, I got an 85. Not the best I’ve done this year. Still, I’m satisfied with it.”

“Oh, it’s still a good grade.” Apparently, Rikka was concerned over my grade in addition to hers. She probably saw me working with her so much and worried I wasn’t studying on my own. How nice of her to be concerned.

“Well, it is my best subject you know. I’m fine with math. It’s the other subjects you need to be concerned over.” I wanted to calm her worries. Rikka replied with a sweet smile. “Oh. Then you shall succeed in the others too. Otherwise you’ll suffer a punishment contract.”

Punishment contract? It sounds like a punishment game to me. Sounds somewhat fun, but that last test itself felt like I just went through one.



In the end, I was soundly beaten by Rikka in the two subjects she was best in: Japanese and social studies. Considering that Rikka almost got a perfect score on the last test, there was no way I could top her this time.

In Japanese, I got a 73 while Rikka got a 97. Social studies was much closer, but I lost 77-80. Incidentally, this test didn’t cover a lot of material interesting to Rikka, so her grade was lower than usual. I thought I could top her on that test, and yet I was defeated. Considering her talent in Japanese, there was no way I could top her in that subject. You don’t need the power of the Devilish Truth Stare to understand what I was thinking.

It was after school and Rikka was delightfully clapping to celebrate her victory over me. “Today’s results. Yuuta: 1 victory. Myself: 2 victories. Thus, I win, and Yuuta has a punishment contract.”

“Um, why does this have to finish with today’s results? We have more tests to get back, don’t we?”

“Huh? Will it be more exciting to settle it tomorrow?”

“I don’t think you could say it’s settled until then...” And now it looks like tomorrow’s results will be much more interesting. I look forward to seeing what I got. It looks like I have a chance at winning after all.

Heh heh heh, tomorrow we get back the elective results! Call me the demon of electives because it’ll be tough to top me! Back in middle school, I got an 87 on our health and physical education exam (the highest I got before high school), earning me second place in the year and the nickname “Mr. Lonely.” That’s just more dark history I have.

“Alright, it’s settled. Tomorrow’s test scores will ensure you are the one contracted to me!”

“You may dream it so, but remember that you are the one contracted to me, thus making any contract of yours invalid.”

“Isn’t that a bit unfair?!”

“It was a joke. If I should perhaps lose, I shall contract myself to you. No matter the details, the contract will not affect me too badly.”

“Hey! You’re awfully confident, aren’t you...”

“No matter the details,” huh? She might want me to try something like having her make lunch for me until summer vacation. I could die in the process, but eating a homemade lunch would be dreamy!

Something else I could do... have her wear cat ears after school until summer vacation. I’d enjoy seeing that. She’d have to go “Rikka-nyan!” too!

“So, then today you shall make a new contract with me...”

Gulp. I swallowed to prepare myself. What’s this “punishment contract” going to be? At least I know it won’t be to help her in math supplementary lessons.

“and become a magical girl.”

“Homu?!” She was really happy today. Can’t say I am.

“Wait, wait. You said that so quickly that I don’t understand what you were saying. Well, I know what you meant, I loved that show too, but I don’t have a wish that could help with your entropy problems. Yeah, I’m not sure that I could come up with a suitable one. Besides, I’m a guy.”

Again, I was assuming our interests in anime were the same. I shouldn’t act like Oofuru, who does whatever they want at school. “Or um... was that what you wanted?”

“Tsk tsk. This is different. It goes along with my style of promises, as I said earlier.”

“What you just said earlier?!” What was that? She’s probably thinking something like, “This came to mind just now, now do it!” Awfully chuunibyou-ish of you, Rikka. Yeah, that’s probably it.

“And now we shall execute this contract. Here, take this.” Rikka grabbed something out of her school bag and handed it to me.

“Um, what is this? What do you want me to do with it?”

“It is clothing used in transformation. Now, TRANSFORM!” Rikka urged me on with a wink.

I can’t speak. Seriously? Does she seriously want me to tarnish these cute clothes by wearing them....? My courage is lacking to wear them—or really, it’s natural that I’d resist wearing women’s clothing. Seriously, this really is a punishment game. I wasn’t mistaken at all.

“How should I say this? What do you want me to wear? This?”

“Naturally. This is my own design. It shall link Yuuta and me together through a contract.”

“Seriously?!”

“Serious. The Devilish Truth Stare was able to measure your waist and bust sizes. Upon wearing this, you will be a perfect magical girl.” She handed over a wig as well... It was styled in pig-tails. This is definitely weird.

I definitely wouldn’t wear this by choice. And then it hit me: What if this is just an illusion? What if it’s all in my mind?

“Well, I’d like to...”

“You said that you would uphold your promises to me. Was that a lie...?”

“I...” Rikka began to cry. If she was acting, she would’ve been at the top of her acting class. Today she was wearing her eyepatch, so I couldn’t see the golden eye. Maybe that one was smiling at me.

“I, I wasn’t lying...! I keep my promises! I’ll make a contract with you and become a magical girl!”

“That’s my Yuuta! Your transformation catchphrase is ‘Brave up!’”

“Hey!” I replied furiously. That’s too cliché. Moreover, I have a hunch it’s a clumsy catchphrase too. Since I couldn’t rebuke Nibutani this morning, am I gradually going after my friends instead?

“Now, while you are transforming, I’ll wait outside.” Rikka quickly ran out of the classroom. Apparently, she’s not the type to attack while the hero is transforming. Awfully nice of her.

Now then, even though I said I would transform, I can’t get rid of this embarrassment. Again it appears like I’ll be changing into a girl against my

desires. A promise is a promise and a contract is a contract. I've got no alternatives here....

"Whoa. This fits perfectly. Amazing." After changing clothes, I couldn't help noticing how it was tailor-made for me. With full black attire, this cool Evil Eye magical girl was alone in the classroom.

Strangely, I didn't mind wearing it. It was like a perfect cosplay outfit. It made me feel magnificent.

The hair was a bit long though. My skirt too.... Not trying to complain...

In addition to a long skirt, Rikka prepared knee-high socks, which made me look even more like a girl... Hmmm... Feels like I've awakened... No! I can't enjoy this!

I'm in a crisis!

While I was stressing out, Rikka returned to the classroom with an awfully happy expression. "Oh! Yuuta has become a magical girl!"

"It really suits you. You look wonderful."

"Ah, thanks... But, did you make this just for a punishment contract?"

"Hmm, not really. You could call it something like that." That was a questionable response. This was really carefully made. She must have spent a lot of time making this costume.

Seeing through my doubtful expression, Rikka commented, "It's really a present. Thank you for being with me." Ah, that's what her real intentions were. She shyly looked down.



It finally sunk in. I nodded as I got it. No doubt Rikka had planned this ahead of time. The day we got back our tests. This “punishment contract.” Everything. All of it was planned.

Today... Today was exactly our one month anniversary. This costume was likely her way of celebrating with me. That’s why she’s looking away from me. We’re really two of a kind.

“I see. Then I shall treasure this costume. Thank you. I also have something to give you to celebrate.” I went and grabbed her present from my bag. You know, the one I got for her to celebrate.

Even after talking with Nibutani and Kazari-chan, I was still troubled over how to give it to her. Finally, I decided to give it to her directly. I didn’t expect this to happen, but now I had a good opening to hand it to her.

“What’s this? Can I open it?”

“Sure. It’s a present for you.” Rikka opened the parcel wrapped with cute decorative paper. As soon as she saw what was inside, she gasped cutely. “Whoa! It’s so cute!”

“It’s not as grandiose as what you gave me to wear, though. Um, this is to say thanks for being with me.”

“There’s no need to worry. I’ll wear it! Thank you Yuuta!”

Her present was a scrunchie with a ribbon on it. I awkwardly asked my little sister what she would like, and she picked this out. Rikka immediately put the scrunchie on her wrist and tightly held onto the ribbon.

“What effect does this scrunchie have?”

“Well, It doesn’t have one... neither does the ribbon too.”

Confronted with that information, Rikka puffed out her cheeks. “Ooooh, we’ll have to infuse this ribbon with magical power then. For the time being, it will adorn my bag.” Rikka cheerfully tied it to her bag after saying that.

Well, it’s really designed to be worn in your hair, but I guess this is fine too. I would be in anguish if someone saw me wearing this outfit, so it’s time to change back into my uniform.

“I’m glad you like it. Well, it’s time to change-“

Before I could finish, the classroom speaker played a tone and then...

“Angel! It’s time for battle! Show yourself! This-“

The speaker cut off while that voice was broadcasting. Of course the staff wouldn’t let someone say something that outrageous to the whole school.

At the same time, that voice was familiar. Maybe it was some radio or television show I heard, but I remembered hearing that voice. I can’t place it though. Whoever it was played that role perfectly. It was like they were a voice actress.

But I couldn’t stop thinking about that girl’s voice. Not what she was saying; just the voice. I played it over and over again in my head.

“Yuuta? What’s wrong?”

“Ah, I can’t help but think I’ve heard that voice before. A girl in our class maybe?”

“Hmm, I’ve never heard that voice before. She’s probably someone from another school. Besides, it seems like she’s inviting me somewhere. Where should I head to?”

“Why do you think that message was for you?”

“She called for me as ‘angel.’” One of us had energy to spare. Don’t bother guessing; it’s just her.

No! I’m positively sure that message was not meant for you to go somewhere! “But you’re not an angel.”

“Well, let me tell you a secret.”

“That’s going to be a lie. Angels have wings!”

“True. I am what you refer to as a dark fallen angel. I... don’t have wings. That’s why she was probably summoning me. I am prepared for battle.”

“That’s so cool?! Well, you may have the Devilish Truth Stare that was granted to a fallen angel by the god of the demon world, but you shouldn’t fight! This is different. It’s probably some anime research society stunt...”

Memories of that incident came to mind. About a month prior, the anime research society was involved in a... masked event, was it? Oh well, my memories of that time have vanished already. Probably wasn’t important enough for me to remember a month later. Let’s try to focus on what’s happening now.

“Yuuta, we must prepare for battle. If she does not appear in front of us, it is our duty to respond. We must go on a sortie!”

“What do you mean ‘go on a sortie’?”

“Exactly what it sounds like. We must find the owner of that voice. Initiate Devilish Truth Stare - Detection mode. She is likely prepared for an ambush in the broadcasting room.” Rikka had already taken off her eyepatch and revealed a new ability.

Naturally, the first place anyone would think to check would be the broadcasting room. Regardless, is the Devilish Truth Stare like those glasses that can track down criminals? As usual, that would be handy to have on hand.

"I got you, I understand. Well, it would be nice to go meet such an interesting girl, but do you mind waiting? I can't go out like this..."

"Huh? Can't Magical Girl Yuuta eliminate her?"

"I can't do it! If I go out... Oh yeah. This is a treasure you gave me! There's no way I could use it for something as simple as this! Besides, my magic hasn't..."

"I see. You have no choice but to undo your transformation. I am concerned she shall escape, so I shall move ahead to track her. Contact me if something happens."

Rikka dashed out of the classroom. Normally you wouldn't expect her to have those kinds of physical abilities. She's usually so docile; it's such a huge shift in her character. If this situation goes into a battle, I don't need to worry. Rikka will definitely win. I wasn't in a hurry to change into my uniform.

But if Rikka was right and this girl wasn't from our school, then there would be a possibility that she could end in a fight with Ms. Amusing. That wouldn't be good. Now I was quickly changing into my uniform.

I was strangely a bit reluctant to change out of the costume (?), but thankfully I was able to finish changing without anyone seeing me.

"Now then, which way to the broadcasting room?" Before, I could hear what direction the signal came from, but now the hallway was too noisy for me to tell which way to go.

"Where is she?! This way?"

"Where did we go already?"

I went to open the door to the hallway. As I put my hand on the door, it unexpectedly opened. A suspicious girl came in to take refuge, or should I say,

she quit while she was ahead. She was panting like she had just won first place in the 100 meter dash.

After her breathing slowed down, she looked in my direction, and our eyes met.

“Well, if it isn’t Hero?”

The girl before me, looking like she had just loaded a peashooter, was Satone Shichimiya. How long had it been since I heard her embarrassing nickname for me?

Chapter 4 : Chuunibyou VS Chuunibyou

Satone Shichimiya was my friend in middle school. To be precise, I met her in my first year, and she was my friend until second year. As such, she was the only person who understood me. Conversely, I think I was probably the only person to understand her as well.

That's right. During the time when I was infected with chuunibyou, she was as well. Thinking back on it, my fall into chuunibyou was most likely influenced by her. If I hadn't met her, I probably wouldn't have been infected.

When I first met her, she was already infected. She wore a cape and carried around a fake sword. It was really cool. I really, really admired her. It's probably due to that attraction that I started talking to her, became friends with her, and became infected too.

Whenever I came up with back story for my Dark Flame Master alter ego, she would always think it was cool. To be fair, she helped produce some parts of it as well. But she knew about it all. The dark notebook, Gerzoniansesu, everything.

We chatted together, fought together, made fun of each other, and got mad at each other. There was nothing else that I wanted to do then. I wished those days could continue forever.

But... Shichimiya moved. She suddenly changed schools one day. I didn't hear anything about it, so I didn't know ahead of time. I didn't believe that she could ever go away. She never contacted me or gave me any new contact methods, so I didn't know how to speak with her after that. It might be exaggerating, but I didn't know how to live anymore after we parted.

After that, I was the only chuunibyou patient around. Of course, I'm not afflicted anymore. Maybe, if she hadn't moved away, I would still be infected like she was. But that's something I wouldn't know about as things played out.

Hiding all these emotions is difficult with her suddenly appearing before me. I'm uneasy about what to do. Why is she here? No, why didn't she find some way to contact me? No, why is she here NOW?

"Damn it Hero! Looks like the Organization is after me. I'm hiding in here. Wonder if they'll go away if we calm down and hide in here."

"Huh?"

"Tsk, there's an awful lot of those Organization troops. I leave it to you Hero!" I don't really get what she's saying, but that's definitely how Shichimiya would talk. She quickly hid herself in the cleaning closet.

A few seconds later, some members of the Organization (probably Broadcast Club members) came into the clubroom. "Hey you. Have you seen anyone strange come in here? She was dressed like some magical girl villain with a cape!"

"Ah, I saw her. There was some loud commotion in the hallway, so I peeked and saw your magic girl run in the opposite direction."

"Damn she's fast! If you see her again, stop her. She's on the Wanted List."

"Umm, was she the one on the broadcast a little while ago?"

"Yep, that's her. We were shocked! She's probably an intruder. Well, let us know if you see her!"

And so they took off down the hallway about as fast as Rikka did. Is everyone in this school an athlete... Incidentally, you're not supposed to run in the hallways anyway, but I can't really say that now.

I turned my glance to the cleaning closet. Now then, what should I say to her? "It's all right to come out now."

A cheerful, small figure came out of the cleaning closet. “Nyahaha! Attaboy Hero! You really drove them away with your flames of darkness!”

“I didn’t use that!”

“Hmm...? It can’t be... Have you... sealed away your powers, Hero?”

“Um, I can’t say that I sealed them... but it’s been a while since we last saw each other. I don’t know what to say past ‘it’s been a while’ though. Well, why are you here?”

“Why that’s obvious! I’m here to wage war with Angel!” She looked a bit puzzled, but spoke with tremendous power. She continued, “It’s been a while, Hero!”

She hadn’t changed one bit. Well, she had changed her hairstyle a little. Back in middle school, her hair was straight and shoulder-length. Now it was much longer and curled in something called “Twin Rings.” Looked good on her. Her hair wouldn’t look good in pigtails.

Nothing else was changed. I even saw the heart sticker that I made. No changes in fashion for her, it seems. She’s pretty much the same as she was in middle school; she hasn’t grown up yet.

Her uniform looked like it belonged to a different school. That’s likely what gave that person from the broadcasting club the impression that she was a magical girl villain. That high school was probably in the midst of changing their uniform. Wait, what high school would use this uniform? Besides, that long scarf reminded me of the days when I was a demon king. She wore a cape back in middle school, so it was probably an evolution from that phase. She still had that kitten pocket on the back, too.

Her style was a bit different than Rikka’s, but Shichimiya was wearing black knee-high socks like Rikka. She was slightly taller than Rikka, though.

But that was all on the outside. It looked like she was unchanged on the inside too. This daredevil had no fear of God, or in today's case Angel. The only word you could use to describe her imposing recklessness would be "cool."

And yet, while she was healthy and vivacious, she was harder to control than a normal person. What else would you expect from the perfect Evil Eye chuunibyou patient? There weren't many faults in her made-up stories either. When I was infected, she was like this ultimate existence. That, in a nutshell, was Satone Shichimiya. So many made-up stories, brave spells, and the like. I couldn't even begin to tell them all.

There was only one thing I wanted to ask her. "It really has been a while. Um, I've been wanting to ask you something. Back then, why did you disappear without telling me anything?" How would she reply? Would she reply?

She smiled and replied, "That's an idiotic question. Did we even part at all? The moment I said those words, we'd be separated. We'll always be in this world, so we can never truly separate. That's the rule of this world. It's a Heavenly Connection!"

Yep, she's still Shichimiya. "Rule of this world" and a "Heavenly Connection" indeed. She's so cool. Well, even though she said those lines, it looks like she didn't think of anything to say if we met again.

"You haven't changed at all."

"Nyahaha! I will forever be as I am now! ☆"

"I see that... Well, let's go back to what we were talking about. Why did you come here? Why did you announce that challenge through the whole school?"

“Well, I just said that I had something to say over the speaker and they let me. As soon as I declared war on Angel, they started to get mad. It really surprised me. I screwed up. I should’ve looked for her from the beginning.”

“Well... did this ‘Angel’ come find you to start your war?”

“Huh? You don’t know her, Hero? Could it be that you’ve already finished her off?”

“What? I don’t understand what you’re saying. What’s going on?”

“Huh, isn’t this school in the world of the dead? I thought Angel would certainly be here and I could whip her. I guess everyone’s come back to life.”

“This isn’t the world of the dead! Besides, there’s something else you haven’t mentioned! If this is the world of the dead, then how did you get in here?!”

“Yes, I was quite troubled by that problem. Somehow, suddenly I found myself here. Since I had no memory of coming in here, I was quite worried when I first awoke....”

“Wouldn’t that mean you died?!”

“Not really. I’ve already regained my memories of how that happened. It feels like my soul has been released. Of course, what else would I expect from Hero?”

“I didn’t do anything!”

Wait a minute. Ah, so that’s what happened. It’s starting to come back to me. I remember what was mentioned in the anime research society’s masked girl incident. “This world is the world of the dead!” It spread around the school quickly. Was she the one who said it? I tentatively prepared to ask her about it.

“Going back to what we were talking about, you basically heard a rumor that Angel was here, and that’s what made you come here?”

“Hmm. Well, I can’t say that it’s 100% true or not, but I did hear a rumor saying Angel was here. It sounded fun.”

“Fun huh... Well, how fortunate to run into you. I suppose I should be happy we met again, but...”

“It wasn’t an accident. If you have things happening by chance and more things happening by chance, then eventually it’s fated to happen. We were destined to meet again. The world wished it to be.”

“...” She makes it sound so grand for us to meet again. How would the world have us meet again?

“Yes, just like when a detective is always around when a crime occurs, when a rival is there, a hero has to appear! Thus these chance events made it fated. Once I heard this interesting rumor, I came to see the truth!”

“So basically, your grand ‘our reunion was inevitable’ thing wasn’t planned at all!”

“Nyahahaha! You’re the same as well Hero!”

Shichimiya stepped forward as she was retorting to my comments. She stopped in front of me. Due to our difference in height, she looked up and continued. “Looks like you’ve grown a bit, Hero. I remember us being about the same height, but now you’re taller than I am. The battle against time is very, very difficult.”

“Who are you fighting against now?!”

“The only one I fight is my rival.” As she went on vaguely, Shichimiya stood on her tiptoes and placed her hand in front of my head to confirm our height differences.

She didn't look like she grew up since I last saw her, but now that she was up-close, it looked like she had grown after all. I still had to bend down to talk to her... Whoa. It's like she's so far away.

Back in middle school, I didn't feel there was anything wrong with being this close, but we were high school students now. Besides, we had to compare heights in middle school. You don't have to do that now.

Granted, she was pretty cute like this, even when I wasn't helping. NO! NO NO NO! I'm Rikka's boyfriend now.

"Huh? You're starting to blush, Hero. Oh no! Has Angel gotten to you?!" I shook my head "no" in an attempt to gesture "it's not like that." So... my face really turned red... I suppose this could be a talent I didn't know about.

At that time, whether it was God assisting me or cursing me, I heard a voice. Someone was coming into the room. "Yuuta! Is she my rival?" I looked over and there was Rikka, fresh from searching the grounds. She stared right at Shichimiya. She looked like she had gone straight into "danger mode"

Shichimiya replied with laughter. "Heh heh heh. Nyahaha! So you must be Angel, right? You survived, huh? Or are you a new Angel? Oh well, it doesn't matter!"

"True. I am Angel. To be precise, I am a Dark Fallen Angel! Your opponent shall be me! Return Yuuta!"

Rikka was playing along. It must have looked like Shichimiya took me as a hostage.

"Yuuta? Ah, you mean Hero here?"

"He's not a hero! Yuuta is a demon king!"

"That true? But Hero is Hero. That means... he's told you his full name already?"

“Yuuta is a demon king! I am the user of the Devilish Truth Stare, Yuuta’s contractor, the Dark Fallen Angel, Rikka Takanashi!”

“Nyahaha! Rikka-chan huh? Nice name. Then let me introduce myself as well.”

Shichimiya stepped back from me and began to speak. “I am Sofia Ring SP Saturn the 7th! I’m known as Sofia-chan, the Magical Demon Duchess. I rule over 7 of the dark magic lands. Remember that, kay?”

It was like she was spouting a catchphrase after transforming. A little bit changed from what I remembered but, other than that, it was consistent with what she made up back then. Unfortunately, why these two should never have met soon became apparent.

“Now then, since Rikka-chan is Angel, it’s time for us to start our battle!” Shichimiya was grinning, but the atmosphere was anything but comedic.

I tried to break into the confusion. “Wait a minute! There’s no reason for you two to fight!”

“Hero, Angel is right in front of me. That’s all the reason I need. It’s destiny!”

“Yuuta, my rival is in front of me. She is aiming at me, so I must fight. It’s destiny!” As Rikka was talking, Sofia-chan—wait, Shichimiya—was preparing to attack.

Seriously, those are some flimsy reasons to fight each other... As I was thinking, Rikka also went into a battle pose. Why are these two so motivated to fight...

“Invoking Devilish Truth Stare—” Rikka took off her eyepatch, revealing her shining golden eye. However, Shichimiya wasn’t shocked like people usually

are when she unveils it. It had no effect on her. “....Quite the foe. She’s not yielding to the Devilish Truth Stare!”

“Heh heh heh. So that’s the Devilish Truth Stare... She’s quite tough.”

“The Devilish Truth Stare is the strongest! Yuuta, get down! It’s time for me to get serious! You shouldn’t be in danger as I expand this field. Sealing Circle of the Imprisoned King!”

So she was putting up some kind of mysterious field. If it wasn’t dangerous, then why was she using it?

“Oh, this is amazing. You’ve shown me something cool, but that’s quite a simple power isn’t it?” She was able to see it?! These two are amazing. They seriously have powers.

“Nonsense. The field expansion has already concluded. Break open the door of darkness! Release the despair locked inside! Strike with the power of the ruined kings! Lead her to the end of her trail!”

“Is this ultimate magic?” I unintentionally rebutted. Rikka was going all out today. Usually she didn’t use this many complex words.

Rikka yelled the final part towards Shichimiya. “Schwarz Aschenputtel!” Wait, why yell “Black Cinderella”? Oh well. If I’m the only one who knows what it means, so be it.

“Damn, that’s strong. If my shield had been a second late, I’d be gone by now. You’re strong, aren’t you, Ms. Devilish Truth Stare Fallen Angel? Guess Sofia-chan’s going to have to get serious too.”

Shichimiya was moving around to defend against Rikka’s assault. Of course, she was moving to block against something I couldn’t see at all. What was going on here? This field must have some strong magic within it. Was it going to explode anytime soon? At least I’d get to see it then....

“Is that all you have?”

“Heh heh heh... Nyahaha! You wish! I’ve barely shown any of my power thus far. Didn’t you notice that? Too bad your spell’s about to end!”

Shichimiya again went into a pose, taking a step back from Rikka. “I’m the Magical Demon Duchess, not just your ordinary cute magic girl! I never go easy on anyone!”

“!”

“Too slow! Take this! Strike her! HAAAAAAAAAAAA! Dark Phoenix Blazing Wave!” Shichimiya acted like she was drawing a bow and then fired a shot.

Of course, I still couldn’t see if it had any effect. Apparently this Dark Phoenix Blazing Wave was like shooting a bow-and-arrow to cause an explosion. Rikka collapsed on all fours from the hit. It really hurt that much...

“Ughhhhh...”

“Nyahaha! Should’ve been prepared!” Shichimiya put her hands and laughed loudly. Of course, I looked over to her and noticed that she was also leaving herself unguarded.

“So, how’s our Fallen Angel, Rikka... isn’t there?!” I looked over, and Rikka had really disappeared. What? She couldn’t have... run away?

Before I realized it Rikka was right beside me. When did you...

“That was an afterimage. I have suffered no damage.” Come again? You pretended to take damage, but didn’t take any?! Now you’re boasting about it too?! Were you just playing with us?

“My... My Dark Phoenix Blazing Wave had no effect?!” She was also playing around with Shichimiya. Now it was her turn to be on all fours. Granted, this probably hurt more psychologically than any physical damage.

Shichimiya rose up and prepared to attack again. “Damn, I’m not through yet! I won’t lose to you! I’m using an aerial attack. Take this!”

“Yuuta, it’s too dangerous!”

“Ahhh!” I was shoved out of the way and screamed. Unfortunately, I hit a desk and fell on my back. Was I safe from the blast, or was I even in any danger at all? I don’t know. The battle continued on without me.

“Crimson Flames rise! Clad the flames with darkness! Prepare to burn in the dark abyss! Demon Flame Blast!”

“Damn... Devilish Truth Stare Infinite System activate! Defense engage! Hold...”

This amazing battle was taking place right in front of me, and I couldn’t see what they were doing. Why are these girls fighting so intensely? You’d easily get the impression that they were really fighting with powers, but there were none to be seen.

Seriously, it was actually rather calm. Normal people would be puzzled as to what was going on. To be fair, I also had no idea what they were doing.

“You’re still up?! Heh heh heh, not after this...! Dark Phoenix Blazing Wave: Multiblast!” Shichimiya’s re-using an attack she used a while ago, but this time it has multiple beams. Will this work?

“Take this! And this! And that! ... Did I get her?!” Shichimiya wanted this to be over. But there was still more fun to be had. Or was she just saying that to say it?

“I already know that attack. The Devilish Truth Stare has seen it all. Final attack: END OF ETERNAL INFINITY!”

“Agh! It’s too... powerful... I can’t... take any more... I’m done. You win.” And our battle appears to be over. Shichimiya declares defeat with both hands.

I'm not sure if I'm pleased or not with this outcome, but victory and defeat have been called.

This time, Rikka had the better tactics, but if I had to say, I would've expected Shichimiya to win. I was shocked.

"You also have darkness powers, don't you? It's annoying, but next time I'll be stronger than you!"

"I have them. Remember: the Devilish Truth Stare is the strongest. You shall never defeat me. Thus you will never get near Yuuta!"

"Huh? Because you're Hero's contractor?"

"Yuuta is the Demon King!"

"I'm the ruler of the Demon Worlds. Magical Demon Duchess Sofia! I get it. Wait and see; next time I'll get my revenge!"

After spouting those lines, Shichimiya flipped her scarf and ran out of the classroom. "Wait and see," huh? We reunited, and then suddenly separated again.

But this time it sounded like we would meet again soon for some reason. It didn't feel like we would be apart for that long again.

While my eyes followed Shichimiya, I was worried about Rikka. She lent a hand to me, since I was still on the floor. "Are you okay, Yuuta?"

"Yeah. Thanks." I took her small hand and got up. Come to think of it, she was the one who pushed me onto the floor. Oh well. She was just trying to save me from being hurt.

"Who was that girl?" Rikka's concern had changed into pouting. This was difficult to answer. I thought about telling her a lie, but it's best to tell the truth.

“She’s Satone Shichimiya, although she goes by the name Sofia Ring SP Saturn the 7th. She was my friend in middle school.”

“Your friend from middle school?” Rikka was now frowning. This was new for her. Can’t say I was happy to see this expression, though. What could I do to make her stop frowning?

“Yeah, but just for a little bit. She transferred schools during our second year. I hadn’t heard from her since then.”

“Oh.” Was that a bit of relief? She exhaled a little sigh. She looked relieved for a second, but then she raised her eyes to me again and frowned. “Then why was she here today?”

“It looks like she came here to fight an Angel.”

“That’s not what I meant. Why was she here with you?”

Ah, so that’s what she’s talking about. That’s difficult to answer too. “Well, it was a chance event. The broadcasting club was chasing after her and she ducked in here to take shelter. We met for the first time in a while and talked for a bit.”

“Oh. So you weren’t hugging each other?”

“Hug each other?!” I wouldn’t think about it! I got the feeling we were thinking on different levels here.

Ah, was it that? She must’ve seen us when we were comparing our heights and then got the wrong impression on what was happening. Knowing Rikka’s timing, that’s quite likely what happened. Now she was upset over a misinterpretation.

“We weren’t hugging! It’s all right! I would never do a thing like that with her!”

“Really?”

“Really. I’ll say it as many times as it takes. I wouldn’t do that!” Now it seemed like I was telling a lie, but there was nothing else I could say. But it looked like it might backfire if I didn’t do something else.

I breathed in. There was only one thing I could do now. I took off my glove. “... Ah, I swear on this coat of arms. I invoke the effect of this ‘yu.’ I promise that I did not hug that girl.”

“...” Rikka was silent. After a little while, she closed her eyes and nodded. It was profound, but what was she trying to tell me? For some reason, my heart was beating fast. I can’t take this...

“O, oy? Are you...” Her hands opened, waiting for mine.

“Yeah.” Though she still looked unhappy, her face started to redden. Rikka took a few steps towards me and then leapt into my chest.

Squeeze. I swear you could hear that hug.

“Um....” Has this misunderstanding been solved? Are you okay? I put my hand on Rikka’s shoulder.

“I, I’ve only felt this from you... I didn’t hug her... I promise!”

“Yeah. Me too.”

.... What a sweet voice. Isn’t it fascinating? Romantic?

“I’m going to read inside you again.”

Invoking the worst ability at the worst time!

“Stop... Stop it!!!”

“You’re thinking ‘I love you.’”

“ ... ”

She got it right. That was exactly what I was thinking. For some reason, this lovey-dovey feeling just rose in me. Well, it was our one month anniversary. Becoming friends with her was such a great idea.

Chapter 5 : The Rumored Magical Demon Duchess

“Ha ha ha ha! Oh man, did you hear what happened yesterday? We finally had a magical girl appear in our world!”

This person, in a euphoric state like God had descended from heaven, and who was laughing for some strange reason while scrubbing the bathroom, was Isshiki.

It was myself, Isshiki, and the assistant class rep Sakada-kun cleaning the fourth floor bathroom after school. Our school, which often had the weirdest design, had placed the boys bathroom in front of our class. Quite convenient when you're in the break between classes.

“It's just a rumor, but man, I heard this girl was absolutely gorgeous too. Did you hear about it?”

“...” I couldn't reply to that mess. Just keep quiet and keep brushing.

“Ah, I heard about it too. My senpai saw this really dark magical girl come out of the broadcasting room.” That was Sakada-kun who replied.

“Hmm, come to think of it, you're in the broadcasting club, aren'tcha Saki-chan? Tell me! Tell me more about what happened!”

“I don't know what happened either. Did you hear the broadcast, Isshiki-kun?”

“Of course! We were busy in the disciplinary council as always, but there was no way we'd miss that broadcast. And why was she talking about angels and battles?”

“Who knows? Maybe there's an angel taking it out on us? Hahaha, like that'd ever happen.” Sakada-kun joked as he washed the floors. Wish he'd wash this conversation away.

“Hmm, did you see her, Togashi? Were you here to see her?”

“I don’t know anything. Alright! I’m through with my portion. Can we get outta here?” I turned off my hose and was trotting towards the door when I heard something behind me.

“Heh. You’re lying.” ... How did you know? I didn’t remember saying or doing anything strange. They couldn’t have developed esper powers behind my back, could they?

“You’re lying, man. We could tell from one glance that you were fibbing.” Ugh...They saw right through me? Damn it, ignore me!

“Forgive me, I was lying. I saw her yesterday.”

“What? What kind of girl was she? I’m interested in hearing more about her.”

Sakada-kun was listening to me go on. Isshiki was very interested as he took out his memo pad, set aside his brush, and snapped “Come on man! Tell the deets!”

“Let’s see, she was cute, wasn’t she? I don’t know all the details, but let’s see. There was a lot of noise from the broadcasting club chasing after her, so I looked in the hallway and saw her at the right time.”

“That it? Well, tell us who she reminded you of? Was she your type?”

“Well, I can’t really say anything...”

“Togashi. I’ve heard you go on and on about Takanashi-san. ‘She’s so cute I think I’d die. She’s the cutest in the world!’ Yet you continue to talk with other girls. Man, I feel so left out. Just remember that our friendship is very important to me...”

“What the hell! I haven’t said anything like that! Well, I do think our friendship is important, but I didn’t think I was leaving you out, was I?”

“Since I’m your friend, how about telling me about these girls you’ve chatted with?”

“You switched right into pervert mode!” But when I thought about it, the only time I’d spoken with him recently was about my relationship. I started to feel a little bit sorry.

“Don’t worry about it! I’m your foreman of love after all.”

“What? Were you able to see through me again?” Damn it, I’ve got no poker face at all. I couldn’t keep a single secret during this entire conversation.

“Don’t worry about it, man. Just tell us about that beautiful mystery girl who came in yesterday! You’re the only one who can tell us about her! We’d never tire of hearing about girls!”

“That’s right! I want to hear about her too! I’d never turn down hearing about a beautiful girl!”

These two were completely unified. As they were smiling, they shook hands in agreement. A new friendship had just been born. Honestly, I don’t mind talking about girls either. If pressed, I’d say I really like talking about them, but this one girl in particular...

“So man, tell us what we want to know!”

“I understand... Um, she had on this strange scarf which made her look like a dark magical girl, just like Sakada-kun mentioned earlier. I don’t know what school’s uniform she had on, though. As for who she looks like... I can’t really say.” It was really difficult to think of who she looked like. There aren’t that many people who she resembles.

“Hmm, so you don’t know the fine details, huh? Any other information?”

“Well, she also...” As soon as I hesitated, we heard a loud voice. “Over here!” “Where?” Right at that moment, I had a bad feeling. It just hit me.

As soon as I stuck my head in the hallway, I suddenly knew why. Clearly, this wasn’t by chance; it was fated that I’d look in the hall. That’s because there was a girl running down the hall at full speed. And naturally, it was fated for me to meet this particular girl.

“Oh! I found Hero!” As she said that, Satone Shichimiya turned on the brakes in front of the bathroom. The rumored Demon Duchess had snuck into the school for the second day in a row. This just had to happen.

Speak of the devil and she appears. Wow, that saying can actually come true. Maybe if we had kept our mouths shut, she wouldn’t have appeared.

“Yo, what’s with the racket out here?” Isshiki, already doubting me today, was walking towards the exit. Sakada-kun was also muttering “What’s up?”

What am I going to do... Everyone’s on edge due to her break-in yesterday. I’d like to hide her in here, but this is the mens’ room. Besides, those two are here...

“Hero, the end of the world is approaching! Let us flee together!”

“What?! You want us to run away?! Over there?!” Yep. Shichimiya ignored my protests, grabbed my hand and headed away from the bathroom.

“Hey. HEY! Togashi! Who’s this chick?” “What?! Who is she?!” As soon as they exited the bathroom, Isshiki and Sakada-kun started to question us. There was nothing I could say to them.

Since Shichimiya was dashing along quite unlady-like as she grabbed my hand, I couldn’t stop her from pulling me along with her.

“Hey! No running in the halls! Ah, it’s that girl!” I could hear Isshiki yelling as we went further and further away.

“She’s over there!” was also coming from behind us. The teachers were coming after her today. I wonder if they’ll consider me an accomplice and force me to write lines. My worries began to pile up as Shichimiya pulled me through the school.



“Nyahaha. I doubt those Organization goons will find us here. I’ll use my magic to ensure they don’t create a barrier to trap us around here.” Shichimiya smiled, neither energetic nor tired. Afterwards, she sat down and started to murmur “Njou njou.”

Sigh. Or I would sigh if I wasn’t catching my breath. I’m an indoor person; I’m not used to running this much. Need more oxygen.

I also sat down and lay my head back. We had run from the Organization’s goons (the teachers) and arrived in a room just off the stage in the gymnasium. There was a lot of sound equipment above us. Since we would reach the gym before club activities started, she probably thought we could hide from the teachers in here and no one would think to check. This room isn’t used very often, so it’s quite a nice place to hide from anyone chasing after you.

“Whew. Finally caught my breath....”

“Not up to the chase, Hero? I don’t know if you’ll be prepared for the day we have to fight to save the world if you haven’t trained every day.”

“There’s no reason for me to fight to save the world...” Well, I’d fight to save Rikka. Out of anyone in the whole world, she’s the one I want to protect. Somehow I had casually switched into these embarrassing chuuni thoughts. They’re likely caused by Ms. Demon Duchess over here.

“Tsk tsk tsk. How can you be a Hero fighting for the world’s safety if you don’t have a reason to fight? You must have some reason why you won’t take up arms.”

“... That sounds so cool! The reason I can’t fight is... nonexistent!” That’s right. There’s no reason I can’t fight to save the world. Then again, it is our world. Man, talking about reasons to fight is a difficult conversation.

“Then... that’s a reason for me to destroy the world!”

“That’s not what I want at all! There’s nothing cool about that at all!”

“Nyahahaha, gotcha. I’m the Demon Duchess, so there’s no reason for me to want to destroy the world!”

“Demons and duchesses have nothing to do with that!” Don’t try to stun me by acting cute! She was as free-wheeling as ever. “So um, you came here yesterday too. Why did you come here today?”

“That’s an idiotic question Hero! I wasn’t able to obtain victory yesterday, so I came back to win! In other words, I came to fight Angel!”

“Ah, so that’s why you’re here...” She came to have a re-match with Angel, er, Rikka.

That reminds me, I was going to meet with Rikka after school today (we took the day off from studying). I doubt she’d like to hear about me coming out of here with another girl. Maybe I should text her... Should that include Shichimiya’s name? I’ll just write “Something came up today. Sorry,” and send it. I didn’t want a rematch, so I added, “Don’t wait for me.”

Shichimiya suddenly drew her face near mine and said, “Also... I got to meet up with Hero again!”

“What?” She was right across from me. I was swimming in her pupils. From being so close, I could see how warm her face was becoming. Her cheeks were red. Probably from running so quickly.

She moved her head back and said, “We never finished our conversation yesterday.”

“You’re right. When I think about it, it’s been a while since we’ve talked with just the two of us. I miss those days. It’s nice, isn’t it?”

“It is. I miss those days too. We’d plan how we would change the world!”

“Did we even talk about that once?!” Is my memory going bad? Back then, we would battle like a hero and Demon Duchess. Our actions may have changed the world. In our minds, at least.

“Well, maybe we didn’t change the world, but someone should have! ☆
“

“Um... Even if we weren’t the ones who changed the world, I’m sure the damage report would be immense.” Perhaps everyone would be infected by chuunibyou. If that happened, then I would have been a prime carrier, meaning I’d be the one to blame. Well, could you use the same term if I deliberately spread the disease around? It’d carry a different meaning at least.

“... I also missed our espionage trips, too. We’d be hiding from those Organization goons like we are now.”

“Ah, we did, didn’t we? How many times did we escape together?”

And there was one day when you completely vanished, too. Here’s what happened: One time the teachers seized her cape and sword, which were in clear violation of the rules. Shichimiya got angry and suddenly disappeared. They couldn’t find any traces that showed she left the school. The students started a rumor saying she vanished into a different dimension. Eventually, they searched

the whole day and couldn't find her. Desperately, I went into the sound equipment room in the gym after school and found her hiding there.

Thinking about that time filled my resolve to find out why she came today. "All that aside, couldn't you have found a more peaceful way to get in here?"

Not sure if I'm to blame for this. I don't usually get angry, but I should've been angrier earlier. You shouldn't trespass onto school property! I can't deny that I'm happy you came back to meet me, but you could've chosen a more peaceful method.

"Nyahaha! Hero, if I had chosen a calmer method, then things would be over by now. That's not fun, is it? It's gotta be flashy! ☆" While she was saying "flashy" she quickly pointed her finger at me. Of course it sounded cool when she was saying it, but not now when I think about it... Well, that's Shichimiya for you.

"So you're saying you wanted to stand out like this... Well, of course you wouldn't want to blend in, knowing you... So um... this has been bothering me a little. Where's your uniform? And why didn't you wear a scarf today?"

"Huh? This is my normal Magical Demon Duchess uniform. If I don't wear it, I wouldn't be a Magical Demon Duchess. It's in remodeling right now. Too hot to wear a scarf outside."

It has been hot lately. At least the loss of her scarf doesn't mean she loses her identity.

"Is that really true Shichimiya...? Or um... are you going to high school now?"

She replied just as quickly as Rikka would, "One in the Demon World." Given the likeness, I should probably give up understanding.

“All right. You’re building backstory just like before.”

She replied while keeping her smile, “Nyahaha! It’s true! I’m just making it up. ☆ “ That was the difference between her and Rikka. Shichimiya had much more impact.

She was a self-aware chuunibyou patient. A completely different type of patient, one who views themselves above others. She might possibly be the perfect form—no, the ultimate form of the disease. Definitely.

As time goes on, your symptoms are supposed to fade away and your past turns into dark history like Nibutani and myself. You learn from your mistakes and move on. That’s just how it’s supposed to go. Rather, that’s the direction I think everyone takes.

But then again, Shichimiya is different. I’m sure that even if her symptoms lessened, she’d continue making things up, trying to assign some meaning to the world. That’s what she does. I get it. Her entire way of speaking is chuunibyou-ish. It’s her.

But reality... well, it’s like this. I don’t have the power to change the world. I can’t summon flames with my power of darkness. I can’t fly no matter how long I train. And I’ll never be able to send a text message into the past.

On the other hand, Shichimiya... does have the power to change the world. I think sooner or later she’d be able to control flames. She might be able to fly in the skies one day or send text messages back in time with some training. That’s why she’s the ultimate patient.

You can tell why I admired her. I was so envious of her abilities. It started way before I went out with Rikka. It’s like she was the biggest chuunibyou patient in the whole world.

“You’re always able to perfectly make something up at any time. You’re amazing. Really cool.”

“Huh? It’s not like that Hero. My style isn’t perfect. It’s perfectly imperfect. A perfect story would leave no error, wouldn’t it? I want to fight, struggle, and resist. Got it?”

... So cool! See, she’s the ultimate patient.

“I understand now. I was really mistaken, wasn’t I? Man, that was a fun conversation, but what should we do about leaving? It’s probably died down out there.”

“Yeah, it probably has. Then play tour guide for me Hero!”

As I stood up, her request stunned me. I answered somewhat frantically, “Huh?”

“Well, wouldn’t I be at a disadvantage fighting Angel in an unfamiliar location? Why not learn about this place?”

“Did you forget how everyone was chasing after you?”

“Ah. Forget that I’m the Magical Demon Duchess, Hero? I can use my powers to disguise myself while we’re walking around.”

“Why didn’t you do that when you snuck in then?!”

“It uses a lot of magic. Angel’s strong, so I didn’t want to waste any before our battle. She’s cold too.”

And with some sound effects, Shichimiya showed me her t-shirt. Don’t misunderstand; she quickly stood up and took off the top of her uniform, showing me her t-shirt. It was a Light☆Speed t-shirt.

“Whoa!” She had one of these? So cool! Damn it, I want mine now!

“Huh? What’s with that super pleased look you have?”

“Uh, this? Well, it’s not what you’re thinking. It’s not that I was shocked— right, you took off your top so quickly I was surprised.” ... I get the feeling that was not the best way to say that... I was just so envious of her shirt that I couldn’t think straight.

“I didn’t think you expected me to undress like that, Hero. Oh well. Would you like some special service?” Shichimiya sounded a bit shy as she pulled her skirt down.

I was stunned, as only two things were clear in my mind: I could hear the rustling of clothes, and I could hear them hit the floor.

...

“No! No! No! No!” I quickly shut my eyes. I shouldn’t look at this. I’m Rikka’s boyfriend. It’s not proper for me to look at her.

“Nyahahaha, It’s clichéd, but I’m surprisingly disappointed to get the usual reaction. I guess I’m a bit of a pervert too. I shouldn’t do such shameful things, should I?”

“Huh?” I opened my fingers a little bit to see what was going on. I saw that she had put on short black tights.

Relieved (can’t say that I wasn’t disappointed), I lowered my hands. Shichimiya looked like she belonged to one of the sports clubs. She didn’t look at all like the girl who stood out just a while ago. It was a really quick change.

“Looking like this, the chance they would recognize me has decreased significantly. Now show me around, Hero!”

“Ah, yes. I understand.” Exhausted, I just said things to get it out of the way. Well, I should prepare to give a good tour, so I started to change the mood.

While I was doing that, Shichimiya was folding her uniform nice and tidy. Usually you'd leave your uniform behind.

"Are you going to leave that here?"

"Yeah, it'd be a pain to carry around. You want to carry it for me, Hero?"

"I don't want to carry around a girl's uniform and look like a pervert!"

"Well, I'll have to retrieve it later then. Alright, let's get out of here in a hurry! GREAT DASH!"

"Yes, yes..." As we were doing our give and take, we headed down the stairs. Greeting us was the sound of balls flying around the gym. Looking out there, we could see the sweaty players on the basketball and volleyball teams. We quickly made way to a side exit and left the gym.

"So um, what would you like to see on this tour?"

"Hmm, anything's fine for me."

"Anything, huh? I can't think of anything strange about our school..." I have no idea what a demon high school looks like. Well, I can't picture it changing that much from my own.

Meh, we'll just walk around. Afterschool clubs are going on anyway.

"Hey, Hero. Did you see my underwear?"

"Why would you break the ice with that?"

"Well, you looked disappointed back then."

"I was not! Not at all! I was excited because you were in tights!" Again, I spoke before I thought things through. I could tell by her grin that this was her real intention.

... But why wear knee-high socks with tights? That's an idiotic thing to ask. It's for the Zettai Ryouiki temptation.

"That so? Well, then I guess you're in luck. Not that this show was for you, but I'm glad you like it, Hero."

"I'm not sure if that's perverted or not, but you're sounding like an exhibitionist!"

"Hero, you know that I'm a Magical Demon Duchess, right? Whenever I'm in my transformation footage, you could see my underwear. If that's not embarrassing, this isn't."

"What?! Then transform right now!" Now I'm the one sounding like a pervert. Guess you could say it's my turn in this sequence.

"Incidentally, the combination footage is nude."

"What are you combining with?!" Someone else? A machine? One of those exoskeletons?! She's already surpassed a normal magical girl... Is this magic... If it's gotta be nude then... it's still not all right!

I was about to say more when Shichimiya meekly interrupted me all of a sudden. "Well... the more recent transformation scenes have the clothes flash for a moment. Sorry to disappoint you. I guess at this point I'd have a half-length transformation, wouldn't you think Hero?"

... I don't need to repeat how meek she looked. It's not like I don't understand what she's trying to say. Well, thinking a little more, I actually really get what she's saying. You're supposed to focus on the fighting scenes, so you don't want to have long transformation sequences. In the beginning they look cool, but when you're in a heated moment, all it takes is a second.

"Well, wouldn't your rival attack even if you only took half the usual amount of time?"

“Then I’d just attack while transforming. I’d shout “TRANSFORM!” and then shoot magical arrows in every direction!”

“Wouldn’t that just overwhelm your opponent?” I think attacking in every direction would have to score a hit, right? KOing your opponent before you finish transforming doesn’t sound like much fun.

“You’re right! Then I’ll use that strategy against Angel! I can combine it with a double-speed transformation and kill two birds with one stone! ☆”

“... If you’re talking about Rikka, I don’t think it’ll be very effective against her.”

“That so? Then Angel... Rikka-chan is also quite strong. That reminds me Hero, what’s your relationship with her? She said something like a contractor.”

“Huh? Ah...” I hesitated. Again, I opened my mouth and said something awkward. Maybe this is because I was talking with Shichimiya. This shouldn’t be something I hide from her.

“She’s my contractor and also my girlfriend.” Upon hearing that, Shichimiya was shocked. To be fair, the thought that I would have a girlfriend probably never crossed her mind.

“... I see. So Hero’s girlfriend is Angel. That means... Hero’s my opponent too...”

“Well, I wouldn’t go that far... We can just play together now too.”

“But, didn’t you just say that you’re a supporter of Rikka-chan, Hero?”

“Well, I’m her contractee.”

“I see. Well, looks like I got to make a plan to take on two people at once now. Maybe I could find the Four Horsemen.”

“...” Four Horsemen... Well, I was sure Isshiki would carry out her plans instantly. Rikka was the one who termed him the first of the four, but there was no way he'd turn down helping a girl.

We were just randomly moving around the school, but we had reached the second floor of the school when I remembered something. I led Shichimiya to the multi-purpose hall. She might not like her anymore, but there was an old friend around here that she might like to see.

“Shichimiya, look in there.” She crouched over me to see what I was trying to show her in the hall. I opened the door slightly so we wouldn't be seen by anyone inside. In the hall, the dance club was practicing.

Together we spied on the club. It was my first time seeing them practice, but they were pulling off some nice moves with some cool music. Everything looked so awesome. But there was one girl we were looking for. It's almost like we were stalking her...

I poked the mesmerized Shichimiya. “Ah, look over there at the tall girl in blue! Do you know who she is?” Taken back slightly by my poke, she looked where I was pointing.

“Huh? Her? That couldn't be... Mori-sama?!” She looked up at me. That smile couldn't be anything else but seeing an old friend.

“Yep. That's Nibutani.”

“Really?! Mori-sama!” Shichimiya shouted her name and went running into the hall.

I could have stopped her. But as she ran into the hall, I could only look on warmly and reflect on the idea. Please grant me mercy.

Of course, Nibutani was shocked to see Shichimiya running towards her. “Wh-What are you doing here?!” You could hear the whole thing outside.

"It's been so long Mori-sama!" She called herself a Demon Duchess, but Shichimiya looked like a cute angel right now. But that wasn't to last, as Nibutani immediately pinched her cheeks for using that taboo name for her. The princess look was gone.

"Don't call me that! Come here!"

"Ry rar rou rintring ryr heeks?"

While still holding Shichimiya's cheeks, Nibutani bowed and apologized to the other dance club members and her upperclassmen. "I'm so sorry. Please excuse me for a moment."

She headed over here. Our eyes met. Damn it! She's going to be pissed at me too, isn't she? All right, time to escape!

Nibutani spoke in a very low tone, "Come here Gerzoni. You can't run away from me." Oh god...

Her eyes were much more pointed than Shichimiya's were. She waited until she was outside the hall before releasing her cheeks. "Just what are you here for?"

"I came to fight Angel!"

Nibutani's eyes and mouth were wide open. She was in absolute astonishment. "Th... That... That was you who broadcast that message yesterday?!"

"Heh heh heh, NYAHAHAHA! YES! That was me! Magical Demon Duchess Sofia Ring has been reborn to face the fallen angel! I've arrived again today!"

Nibutani was at a loss for words. I was enjoying Nibutani's changing facial colors, but I was afraid of what would happen if we left her alone...

“... I should be asking what you’re doing with him.” Nibutani wasn’t out for long before she regained focus and pointed straight at me. I knew it was coming, but damn it, it’s still scary.

“Umm... how did this go...? Well, I was showing Shichimiya around the school when we decided to take the opportunity to see you, and then...”

“... Hmmm.” Nibutani continued to give me a cold look before turning back to Shichimiya. “So, why does she look like this?”

“Ah, that? I was in my magical Demon Duchess attire a while ago, but I disguised myself so my enemies wouldn’t find me.”

“OK. You really haven’t changed one bit, have you?”

“That’s right ☆ I’ll stay like this for all eternity!” This is playing out just like it did with me. Guess you could say this is normal for Shichimiya. Nibutani also looked tired as she shrugged her shoulders. “I haven’t stopped calling you Mori-sama either!”

“Shut up! No, stop calling me Mori-sama! The upperclassmen in the club don’t know that name!”

“Huh? But Mori-sama is Mori-sama!”

“Stop saying Mori-sama! My name is Shinka!”

“What? You called yourself that nickname before!”

“Agh, that’s Dark History!” Looks like even Nibutani gets overwhelmed by Shichimiya. Just like after Kazari-chan pointed it out, I get a happy feeling whenever someone reveals Nibutani’s weak point. Ah, so this is what a sadist feels like?

Again, Nibutani shrugged her shoulders. But this time she sighed and did an abrupt about-face from her stressed look. "Oh well, it's all right. I've called you Shichimiya before, too."

"Huh? What's going on?" Almost like a dog, Shichimiya ran up and embraced Nibutani for reasons I didn't know. She looked incredibly happy.

"AHHHHH! I missed you!"

"Oh, now it feels like I've reunited with the Mori-sama I haven't seen in a while!"

"You weren't moved from the very beginning, stupid?" Oh, a counter by Nibutani. Well, it looks like my role has been taken, so I'm just looking on now.

"Mori-sama, do you hate me?"

"I hate you! Hate you! I already left you behind!"

"I really love you!" No, this wasn't a yuri relationship. Whatever it was, it was a really touching scene.

Ah, she pushed her aside.

"Aww, your power has grown Mori-sama. You were always stronger than I was when transformed in our chuuni days. Oh, what did I call it?"

"Yes, yes. I've changed since then. I'm not the same person I once was. I've moved on from chuunibyou."

Nibutani paused, and then said what her real feelings were. "It's your fault I made my dark history! I can't say I'll return you to how you were before second year in middle school, but I will rectify your chuunibyou!"

"Nyahaha! What are you saying? I proclaim that I'll be chuunibyou for all eternity Mori-sama! Looks like your rectification plan has a problem, doesn't it?

☆"



“Oohh... I’ll definitely rehabilitate you!”

Shichimiya struck back. “Mori-sama. You say that you’ll restore me back on the path that normal people take, but I’ve never once deviated from the path I’m on. I’ve always been like I am now. I’ve always been true to it.”

Oh, she has no dark history. She has nothing to change. If she has nothing to worry about, then she can’t change. From the beginning, she always believed she was in the right.

“Nyahaha, that’s why you can’t straighten me out Mori-sama. You were once righteous, so why do you call that dark history? I wasn’t with you during our second year of middle school, but this happened when I did get to spend time with you. Do you call it that in order to make me cry?”

“...” Nibutani was silent. Maybe she couldn’t find the right words to say. “I... It was my own fault that I was infected with chuunibyou. I’d think anyone, even Shichimiya, would know that! I... also had fun acting like that... like anyone would....That part of it, I can’t call dark history. But don’t patients cause so much trouble for everyone?!” Somehow Nibutani was able to object to chuunibyou.

I also knew what Nibutani was speaking about. Up until about a month ago, I, too, would’ve thought my past was dark history. How could I not I understand what she meant? But it looks like we both enjoyed the time when we were infected. Even Nibutani couldn’t deny that. It might not seem likely now, but there could be a time when I meet Shichimiya again and she would feel the same way we do.

“Aren’t you causing this Angel-whomever a lot of trouble, like you did for all of those teachers?!”

“Nyahahahaha... I did bother them a lot, didn’t I. Yeah... forgive me.” Shichimiya sounded a bit sad and weak. “Though I know I probably bothered a lot of people, I don’t want to live life without bothering others. I don’t think I

could live like you're saying I should. I'm sure there's going to be someone that I hurt or annoy. No one could live without being a pain to someone else; it doesn't matter how big or small it ends up being. That's why I can't live like you want me to. Though it might be selfish of me, I think that's the right way for me to continue on."

—Hero, I'm going to bother you a lot.

—I'm going to be a pain for myself too.

—But I can't live without bothering someone.

As she spoke, I began to remember something. When we first met in our first year of middle school, she said something like that. Nothing's changed. I haven't changed either.

Bothering someone and being by their side have similar meanings. But you couldn't get ten thousand people to agree on that. Other people would likely prefer to say they'd want to be around someone considerate. They wouldn't think that's a right way to live.

Nibutani muttered "... You're really infected..." while looking down.

"Yep. Um, sorry... I've also been a pain to you too Mori-sama. Looking back, even meeting you face-to-face was an annoyance for you. I'm really sorry for that. I'll try not to bother you in the future. Well, sorry about this. Let's go Hero."

"Ah, OK..." After that vague response, I walked over to Shichimiya. It felt like I made a mistake in deciding to show Nibutani to Shichimiya. Maybe they shouldn't have met again. This wasn't what I had in mind.

Behind us, Nibutani began to mutter. "... Wait a minute... Don't misunderstand me, but don't say you won't be a bother to yourself! That... I

don't want you to be a bother to anyone, but I... I'm your friend, so it's all right. Think about it like that! That's why I've wanted to say this to you!"

It was something you'd expect to hear from Nibutani. She'd be concerned about the first line of defense in war. She's the Class King who's concerned about everyone. Even if she's really not the worrying type, she may have a worrying infection. Nibutani emphasized this final part:

"I won't think about when your chuunibyou illness will be completely cured!"

Afterwards, she turned around and went back to her club. I began to consider Nibutani's sense of right. Everyone has their own way of thinking, and what they feel is "right." I began to feel a little regretful that their reunion happened like this. Was it a good thing for them to meet?

"Nyahahaha, Oh, how I love Mori-sama. She's super cool, isn't she?"

"Yeah, Nibutani is a cool class rep."

"She doesn't hate me, does she?"

"I don't think she's the type of person who could hate someone."

Shichimiya was happy to hear that. She smiled. I responded with my own.

And then... "Ah" we heard a voice. We were around the bottom of the stairs when someone noticed us as they were coming down. We looked where the voice came from. Together with Shichimiya and myself, all three of us could only utter the first hiragana character, "Ah."

Immediately after that, Rikka began to speak. "Yuuta! Why are you with my rival?!"

Surprised? Angry? I couldn't tell what Rikka was thinking as she came down the stairs. Once she reached the bottom, she cut between Shichimiya and myself.

Rikka turned her back on me and faced Shichimiya. “Yuuta, how could you do this?!” This was an unusual pattern for her.

“Umm, sorry. I had to do something with Shichimiya. It was...” With the way I was talking, it almost started to sound like we were having an affair. I’m finished, aren’t I...?

“Ooh! Taking Yuuta hostage isn’t fair!”

“... Huh? He’s my old friend, isn’t he? Oh well, that doesn’t matter! Your time has come at last! You’re going to burn like an angel in mid-summer when you feel my flying flames Fallen Angel Rikka-chan! I’m feeling pretty good too! How about a re-match!”

“Let’s do this now, Rival of Yuuta!” I’m not dead yet! Granted, with the way these two are, I couldn’t actually reply with that. It’s all gone to Hell now....

“Alright, then I’m going to transform!”

“Right now. Quickly transform!”

“Feisty, aren’tcha!... Damn it! I can’t transform until I get my transformation device Meraviglia! Agh! Damn it!”

“The Devilish Truth Stare is the strongest.”

“Tactical failure by me. Now I lost twice in a row... Next time I’ll definitely win! You’ll see!” After giving her parting words, Shichimiya ran down the stairs.

It’s over already? Wait, they didn’t actually fight this time... Still, Rikka was already prepared with her catchphrase.

“Yuuta... Did you lie...?” Rikka looked back at me with a serious expression. My face also clenched up.

I was worried that I had told a lie for a moment, but I could honestly say that I hadn't lied to her. "Hmm.. that wasn't a lie. I really had something to do. I had to lead Shichimiya away from the teachers chasing after her..."

"... That so... Nothing else happened?"

"Hmm? Yeah, we didn't do anything else." Outside of those teachers chasing us, I couldn't say anything happened with us except one thing. We did have a chat with Nibutani about the past.

"Oh... That's fine then. But next time Sofia comes, I also want to know. I should know when my rival does something."

"Sofia? Ah, Shichimiya?" I remember now. She introduced herself as that name to begin with, so of course she'd use that one.

"Correct. If she comes again to our school, contact me."

"I understand. I promise to let you know if she comes back."

"Confirmed and promised. Now, let us head back to the classroom." Rikka started walking towards the classroom.

"Oh, that reminds me. Why are you still at school?"

"... Because Yuuta hadn't left yet." Rikka's mouth had a sour expression. She looked like a child. It was cute, but it made me feel really guilty.

"It's my fault this happened. I'm sorry."

"Not really..."

"How about I walk with you to your apartment today, Rikka?"

"... Okay."

After we got back to the classroom, we played that card game again. Rikka wasn't in a good mood at all today. Whether that was because of losing consecutive games or something else, I don't know.

Incidentally, the punishment contract today was writing reflection characters. Today ended with a one win one loss draw, so that carried over until tomorrow. Somehow the characters ended up saying "trespasser." Combined with what was already on me, it wouldn't reveal what I had done, so there wasn't any reason to write them.

The time to use memories was about to come. Indeed, this would be dangerous.

Chapter 6 : The Only One I Love is Rikka

It was Wednesday on an already long week. I quickly walked to school and entered the classroom. As was custom, I went over to greet Rikka, but she wasn't in her seat. She was usually in the seat in front of me reading some book like *Universe Information*, but obviously that didn't happen today.

I hung my bag beside my desk. Looked like she wasn't coming in. Where could she have gone? Oh well. Let's prepare for class.

Not greeting her this morning made me feel really uncomfortable, for some reason. I couldn't calm down. Would she get here soon? I turned pages in my textbook while I waited, until the bell rang to tell students to get to class.

Just as I was thinking about whether she'd come to school today, Rikka tottered in just as the bell finished ringing. All of a sudden, that empty seat in front of me was filled.

I whispered to her "Good morning," but all I got back was silence. Thinking maybe she didn't hear me, I tried to whisper it again, but before I could say anything, our social studies teacher came into the classroom. Rotten timing, man. This uneasiness wasn't going away. It was going to be a rough day of school.

The bell rang to end class, but I wasn't feeling any better. Rikka unexpectedly stood up and walked out of the classroom. Whoa, she hasn't even said one word to me today. I was starting to feel a bit hazy.

"Hmm. Today's my lucky day. For once Togashi and Takanashi-san aren't flirting." Suddenly Isshiki sat in the seat beside me. I was really out of it. He had his usual determined expression and tone. Come to think of it, Isshiki had been the only one to greet me this morning. I was happy that he was talking to me, but a little bit vexed at the same time. At least someone finally said something.

"You make it sound like we flirt every hour on the spot or something like that. It isn't like that."

"What? Every break Takanashi-san turns around and say something like 'Yuuta. I have a new power to discuss with you!' or 'Yuuta. Your powers of darkness are low today.'"

How'd he notice? Rikka would talk so quietly, I didn't think anyone would hear her.

"We still don't do that every hour, man! Besides, what kind of imitation was that... Sorry to disappoint you, but we don't talk like that."

"Dude, that's why it's called an imitation! But I'm curious. Are you guys planning to fight?"

"What's with the future tense?!"

"It looks like you're fighting with Takanashi-san to me. You haven't in the past or in the present, so it must be the future." What kind of logic is he applying here... I guess if he used the present tense, he would've been correct. No, we're not fighting.

"We're not fighting. We won't in the future either! Well, some things happened, but they didn't bother Rikka..."

"I gotta hear about that. Let's start with the first thing: that girl running in the hallway!"

"..." I'm going to determinedly say nothing. No, that's not going to work. Sorry man.

"It's all right. To be honest, I was debating having you undergo a one week monitoring session for breaking school rule #7."

"You wouldn't do that, would you... I don't know anything about that."

“Nah, I was joking.”

“Don’t joke about the rules like that!” Damn it, who’s the one who’s supposed to be serious about the rules here! Stop grumbling like that!”

“Well, it’s not directly related to what happened, but that event did make me think of something.”

“What?”

“Togashi, let’s go to a maid tea house! Once I saw that cutie yesterday, I thought she looked like a maid and wanted to go to one!”

“...” How does her uniform look like a maid? Well, it is Isshiki we’re talking about.

“But I don’t want to go to one.”

He looked up at me. “Then how about telling me some info on that cutie?” What should I do? I have a bad feeling about this. I can’t even retort.

“....Forgive me.”

“Oh, you apologized. Usually, I’d ask you to tell me, but is this alright too? Let’s change the topic before you snap at me with one of your jokes...”

“The stock of rebuttals is depleted! Why would you say I’d snap back at you?! I’ve never once said in front of you that I like maids! Then again, I’m always asking you for advice. It’d be rude if I didn’t answer your questions in return.”

“What?! Man, hurry up and tell me about that cutie! What’s she like? Is that the rumored magical girl? What kind of relationship do you two have?!”

“... Yeah, she’s that rumored Magical Demon Duchess who hijacked the radio broadcast. She’s my friend from middle school. Her name is Satone

Shichimiya, but her Magical Demon Duchess name is Sofia Ring SP Saturn the 7th. And, well, she's infected with chuunibyou."

Isshiki was nodding along while dutifully taking notes. Thinking about how seriously he's writing Sofia Ring SP Saturn the 7th makes me laugh.

"I understand now. She's your old friend, right? Hmm, she's infected with chuunibyou?" That's right; I've never spoken about my time in middle school with Isshiki. Maybe it's a good time to speak with him about how I used to be. It's not that I feel guilty about hiding it, nor that I'm afraid he'll make fun of me. He might even laugh and enjoy the tale. Let's make him laugh.

"Umm, you see, I was also infected with chuunibyou back then..."

"I know that already! Now, tell me more about Shichimiya-san! What does she like to do? What does she like to eat?!"

"You already knew about it?!"

"Doesn't everyone in our class already know about it? Well, the girls might not, but all the guys do. Now your power is to be together with Takanashi-san."

Everyone knew... Damn it, that hurt. "Are you laughing at me?"

"Never. I have respect for you." It really looked like he did.

"That.. that so, huh? Yeah, it's really nice isn't it? Haha, well was I mistaken..."

"It's a wonder if someone doesn't fall ill for a short time. I too was infected. Oh how I miss that bamboo stick sword. Now tell me more about that cute Shichimiya-san!"

Isshiki was fired up. He was already starting to sound happy. Well, anyone would in his shoes... Somehow he switched to a Hokkaido accent.

“Let’s see, where to start? Her hobbies are making up stories. She also likes playing with RPG○aker. I think her favorite food is ice cream? I don’t know where she goes to school, but she transferred to Nibutani’s middle school. Nibutani might have more to say about her back then.”

“Hey man, is there anyone else I chat with about girls besides you?”

“Well, you’ve got a point.”

“There’s something else though.” Isshiki closed his memo pad, changing the atmosphere. He continued on. “You’ve got quite a lot of lovelies around you.”

“‘Lovelies’, Isshiki? You’re from Hokkaido, right? Nah, I wouldn’t think of it like that.”

“Hmm, let me put it another way. You’ve collected a lot of chuunibyou girls around you, then. They just seem to find a way to be around you.”

“I wouldn’t say it like that.” But... Rikka, Shichimiya, there might be a trend. If you count cured girls, then Nibutani too could be added. Thinking about it, there really might be a trend. Unexpectedly, they seem to have resonated with a person who was like them. I told that to Isshiki.

“Well, even though that’s happening, you have to treat Takanashi-san very carefully. Guys who don’t take care of their girlfriends are cursed.”

“That’s natural, man. You don’t have to tell me to treat her carefully.”

“That so? Good for you, man. Don’t forget it. You know she won’t.”

“Yeah!” I nodded in agreement. I couldn’t forget such an important concept!

“Good response. Now, since I’ve obtained some information on Shichimiya-san, how about I thank you by taking you to a maid tea house. Well, I’ve not been to one myself.”

... That again? As if it was planned, we finished just as the bell rang to end our break. Isshiki also took this as a sign to end the conversation and went back to his seat. Rikka... still hadn't returned.

I was thinking about where she was, when she walked back in at the same time Nana-chan came in. Where'd she go? I was very curious about that. But again, she didn't say a single word to me.



Just like before, Rikka quickly disappeared during the next break. As you might imagine, this wasn't pleasant to see. It feels like she's avoiding me, but I don't know why. If I was pressed to think of something, then I'd say it was what happened yesterday with Shichimiya, but she should've calmed down by now. Well, if I can't talk to her, there's no way we could work this out.

As for why she was acting like this all of a sudden, I couldn't begin to think why. I wonder what she'd do if I just tried to talk to her. Would that solve this? She might not be avoiding me after all. I might've just gotten the wrong impression.

There was no time like the present to do something about it. I started to go after Rikka. I went towards the hallway, looked left, looked right, and saw Rikka walking away.

"Wait a minute!"

I shouted again. Wonder if three's the magic number. As I was starting to ponder chuuni thoughts (if the world was trying to prevent me from talking to Rikka today) I heard someone behind me. I looked at who it was and—you guessed it—it was Nibutani.

“What do you want? I’m in a bit of a hurry.”

“I’m sorry. Do you have a moment?” This was new. Nibutani was acting a bit humble. Naturally, I tilted my head in confirmation. Looks like my suspicions about the world might be true. But this was so unusual for Nibutani to act like this. I had to listen to what was bothering her.

“Th, this is unusual. What’s going on?”

“Well, I just wanted to ask you about yesterday...”

“Yesterday? You mean, what happened with Shichimiya?”

“Yeah... Did she say something afterwards?”

While I was trying to remember if she said anything, I started to sense what she was really asking for. If I answered by saying, “She didn’t say anything at all.” Nibutani wouldn’t accept it.

“Hmm, I don’t know why you’re worrying, Nibutani. From what I saw, I wouldn’t worry about Shichimiya. If you know her like I know her, then you don’t need to worry about her, right?”

The point is: You’re a worrywart. Not that I don’t trust her enough to mention that. But you don’t want to say that to a person directly.

“... I see... Sorry. Wait, thank you. Still, it kinda annoys me to hear advice coming from you Geruzoni.”

“Why do you call me that?! Can I go now?!” I know I’ve asked her before, but I couldn’t help reminding her. And to make matters worse, I’ve lost track of Rikka.

“Nope. I still have something to ask.”

“Do you have to ask me at least one thing per day?!”

“Not like that. Ah, that reminds me, usually I hear you go, ‘Rikka, don’t put some power you just thought of in me!’ or ‘Rikka, don’t worry. My powers of darkness are low because it’s lunchtime.’”

Does everyone know about our conversations? I made sure to whisper so no one could hear... And what about that pose? Are you trying to mimic me?

“It, It’s not like that! Have you finished already? If so, I’m outta here.”

“Ah, wait a moment. I want to ask you one more thing.” What the hell is with everyone asking me questions today? Quiz time?

“What?”

“What do you think about Shichimiya, Geruzoni?”

“Huh? In what way?”

“I meant what I said. Thinking about answering it another way?”

I guess I could talk about the daily break-ins. Or else about how she’s a pain. But when I think about it... surprisingly, she never felt like a bother to me.

“Well, though I can’t say I like her daily infiltrations, and I’d wish she’d stop doing it, she’s never been a bother to me. She does whatever she wants when she wants. It’s fun.”

“... I knew it. Yeah, I knew you’d answer like that Geruzoni. But what does she mean to you? You said nothing about that.”

“What are you talking about?”

“This isn’t something that involves me, but if I don’t interfere in your relationship with Shichimiya, Takanashi-san will end up being mad.”

“Wait a minute...”

“Well, try to get along with her. It’s just like you said before: I don’t want the two of you to break up. Sorry for taking your time.”

“Yeah.” After a half-hearted reply, Nibutani went back inside and quickly started a chat with other classmates.

I thought I knew what I was going to say to Rikka... But I couldn’t say anything. I couldn’t rehearse anything in my head either. “Not worth finding her if I can’t say anything to her.”

Maybe I should leave it to chance. Nah. I stepped back in the classroom to organize my thoughts. Rikka came in with the teacher this time too. It was time for Japanese. Of course this would happen.



Fourth period was gym. As it ended, I wanted to try and talk with Rikka, who still hadn’t said a single word to me. It was her turn for lunch after all. After changing clothes in the locker room, I headed back to the classroom alongside Isshiki with Rikka on my mind.

All of the girls in the classroom had wet hair. That’s right, they had swimming lessons today. They were separated by gender, as is the custom these days. Alas, our school took away one of the delights of being a male student.

I left the fascinated Isshiki alone. Not like I wasn’t fascinated by a wet head, but I wanted to search for Rikka.

....She’s not here, is she? That uneasiness is still affecting me.

As I was thinking about what to do, someone nice came into my sights. “Kazari-chan, do you know where Rikka is?” She was drying her hair with a soft towel. Quite sensual.

She looked around the classroom before replying, “My my, wasn’t Rikka-chan here a moment ago? Is she not here?” If she was here before, then where did she go?

“Yeah, looks like it. I planned to eat lunch with her today, but where did she go? Would you have any idea?”

“Hmm, there was nothing unusual during our swimming lesson, but she didn’t look so good today. Perhaps she went to the nurse’s office? Or perhaps she’s picking flowers?”

“Nurse’s office... Got it. Thanks! I’m heading out!”

“Have a safe trip!” All right, let’s head to the nurse’s office.

“Didn’t look so good?” I can’t say that I’ve noticed it, but then again, she hasn’t said anything to me. With her possibly being in the nurse’s office, I’ve got to get there quickly.

This’ll only be the second time I’ve been here since I came to this school, but it looks like nothing’s changed since the last time. No one’s in here again. Do we even have someone in charge of this place?

Of course, Rikka was... not here. Maybe she’s in one of the beds? She mentioned before that she slept in here. So I peeked through a curtain and... there was a sleeping girl.

With a cute, yet refined face, she looked just like some kind of princess of a ruined country getting some rest. You could easily tell she was sleeping. She likely wasn’t aware someone was looking at her. Even though I’ve spoken a lot

about her, I have no idea who she is. We're nearing summer vacation, yet I've not seen her once in this school.

I have a feeling if I asked Isshiki about this beautiful girl, he'd instantly know her name and year. No need to go that far. I could easily make a few comebacks regarding that "demon" written on her forehead too. It's starting to bug me. Did someone write that to tease her?

Well, it wouldn't be right to tease a sleeping girl, so it was probably a joke. Poor girl. I didn't want her to walk around the school looking like that, so I placed a hand mirror nearby and closed the curtains.

Now then, where's Rikka? Seriously, where could she be? Perhaps she went to the bathroom when Kazari-chan wasn't looking. Let's return to the classroom.

Yep, still not here.

As I was looking around the classroom, Kazari-chan, still drying her hair, called out to me "Yo. Was she there, Togashi-kun?" Again, sensual.

"No, she wasn't in the nurse's office. I don't think she'd go flower picking though... Man, where did she go..."

"Hmm, how about the cafeteria?"

"Nah, I brought her lunch today, so I don't think she'd go there."

"Oh, then I have no idea where she could be. Want someone to scratch your back? I can search for her too. I've finished lunch, so I've got some time. If she comes in, want me to call you?"

"... Sure. Though I think it goes 'lend someone a cat's paw.'" I'm such a stickler for details. I cleared my throat and began to compose myself before continuing. "Thanks for offering. I appreciate it. She might be reading a book in the library, so I'll check there. If she comes back, would you let me know?"

Kazari-chan smiled and nodded. Now, let's head to the library.

I searched all over, but still couldn't find her. Here, I ended up forgetting about tools of our civilization. Kazari-chan said she'd contact me immediately, but for some reason I completely forgot about it. Thinking why, it's probably that I didn't want to talk to just anyone, but nothing I can do about it now.

I heard my cellphone go off. I grabbed it out of my pocket and answered.....but no one was there. Was the call cut? Man, what the hell is going on?

I started searching like a madman. I went to the cafeteria, the social studies classroom where we study after school, and even in other classes. Finally, I went to the bench where we ate lunch previously. In the end, I couldn't find her. I wasted my entire lunch break.

Right as the bell rang to end lunch, my cell phone vibrated. It was a text from Kazari-chan. "Rikka-chan has just returned!" I replied, "Got it. Thanks."

My uneasiness was starting to turn into suspicion. This felt bad. I felt bad. Annoying, so annoying. I was starting to get irritated. What's going on...?

When I returned to the classroom, Rikka was laying on her desk. It'll be tough to talk like this...I can't describe what I'm feeling right now.

I too laid down on my desk like Rikka. As 5th period started, I didn't want to do anything. Incidentally, we got our science tests back today.



... If I have to be honest, I felt worse as the class went on. I kept getting more and more depressed.

I don't remember what the lesson was about. I'm sure my notes were horrible. I was a bit happy about my grade on the test I got back, but instantly it went away as I started thinking about Rikka. Before I knew it, class had already started and it was about time for 6th period. I retrieved my English textbook and set it on my desk.

And then it was suddenly after school. Finally, she was bound to say something now. We were going to hang out, or rather, form a new contract. We don't have something to celebrate though.

She spent the whole day without saying anything to me. This might be the first day that's happened. Naturally, this wasn't good.

After saying our final thanks for the lessons, I prepared to leave without saying anything to her. My actions were meant to tell her "Go home!" That obviously didn't help me feel any better, but I was already feeling resentful. I put everything in my bag and headed out of the class without saying a single word.

Ah, enough with this silent treatment! I murmured to myself. I frantically ran down the hall. I don't care what that determined disciplinary member has to say. If I don't catch her as she leaves, then I won't get to see her. I ran down the stairs and got in a position where I could see her walking away.

As soon as I stopped, the phrase "what should I do" went in my head. Or should it be "in what way should I talk to her?" Either one's fine Nibutani! Something else she said popped in my head. "Try to get along!" That's right. I don't want to fight with her.

I'm horrible at staying mad. All that resentment went away instantly. Let's see, what should I say to her? Should I act mad? I don't know, but I'm not going to let Shichimiya get between us.

As she went by, I grabbed Rikka's arm and then spoke.

“Rikka.. Um... Do you want to get some food? Would you like to go together?” I wonder if she’ll ignore this too.

Funny thing, Rikka turned around and answered “... Yeah, I’m hungry,” without meeting my eyes. She quickly put her hand together with mine. Looks like she didn’t want to fight either. Good.

“How about we eat in the classroom? I’m starving as well.”

“Yeah.”

There weren’t many people that stayed behind after saying their final thanks of the day. We went to our seats. It takes a lot of courage to start eating in the classroom right after school ends (and people might think we’re a bit weird for eating after lunch) so we waited until there wasn’t anyone else in the classroom.

There’s a lot of people in our class who either have club activities or part-time jobs after school. As we were the only two left, we’re the outsiders. We don’t go home, nor do we have jobs. It’s an unusual category for a student.

Well, I couldn’t find a job for the summer, and I don’t have any spending money.

“Now, shall we eat?”

I pulled out my lunchbox and set it on the table.

“Alright, thanks for the food!”

We had an after school lunch. Outside of the time difference, it was just like usual. Rikka continued to eat it as normal.

Today was hard to believe upon reflection, but at least I know Rikka was trying to avoid me the whole day. Should I ask why, or let it slide? I think I should know why. I’m her boyfriend after all.

“Um, what were you doing today?”

“... Nothing.”

Nothing... You call making me feel horrible by ignoring me for the whole day nothing... That was an evasive answer. Maybe she could give me a better reply.

“Um... Were you trying to avoid me today?” Fastball on target. Her reply:

“... Not really.” And it’s a wild pitch or a hit on the pitcher. I’m the one who took damage now.

Not really... Even if she was telling the truth, I don’t know what she meant. Yeah, she probably got mad over what happened yesterday. Though I could throw another wild pitch, I could also get a double-play out of it! Thinking my chances were good, I decided to throw another fastball.

“So, are you upset over what happened yesterday with Shichimiya?”

“ ... ”

Silence. It wasn’t a wild pitch, but perhaps it was a ball. Well, thinking about it, it was a difficult question to answer. Should I have left her name out of it? At least I know now that it didn’t put Rikka in a good mood.

... This time, I’m not going to use an excuse. I’m going to say what I should’ve said during our breaks today.

“Rikka... you’re the only one I love. I want you to really believe that.”

“ ... ”

This time she was silent, yet she wasn’t silent. No one else was in the classroom, but I thought I heard something from the hallway. Looking over there, I couldn’t see anything. Probably some baseball hitting the window or something. Whatever it is, it wasn’t coming inside.

I returned to my thoughts. It's tough to put into words.

"Shichimiya is just a friend."

"... Yeah."

"So, I don't want you to forget... that."

"... I won't forget it. Today our contracting power was weak, possibly due to the difficulties of understanding one another. Remember what happened today."

That was definitely a Rikka reply. I understand what she meant immediately and felt relieved.

"Yeah, I will remember today. I understand... I've already carved it into my brain."

We were on the brink of fighting, but the day ended uneventfully. The tension was still in the air though. Things weren't completely all right with Rikka.

Nothing impure happened today. In other words, Shichimiya didn't show up. I have no idea what would've happened if she did come in. I guess I shouldn't hang around her anymore.

But she's just a friend to me. Well, a really important friend.

Still, she didn't come today. What was going on?

Or, am I not allowed to think about her? I don't know.

Should I adopt that "in what way" motif? Is that the right phrasing? Someone please tell me what to do.

Chapter 7 : Jealousy

I admired Shichimiya.

Back in my first year of middle school when my delusions ran wild, it was only natural that I'd admire anyone who helped make them come alive. She was already infected when we met, so I admired her from that moment on. There was no way I could hate her.

I'm afraid it'll be misunderstood, but if pressed, I'd admit I love her. I use that phrasing, but it's not the love that's between two people of the opposite sex. As a friend, as a best friend, and as a fellow patient, I really love her. That's what I think about her.

It's why I thought we'd be able to play around like we did once we met again. I'd imagine we'd go out and have some made-up stories. But we wouldn't use anything I came up with. Maybe it'd be fine if we used something Rikka suggested.

I'm not fond of having to trespass into another school, but that's the kind of relationship Shichimiya and I have now. Unfortunately, Rikka wasn't able to look at it like that. It's something I should've properly explained to her.

The only person I love now is Rikka.

Shichimiya is just a friend. But I haven't introduced her as that yet. How can I prove that to Rikka...?

...

Not only did I spend the rest of the day after parting with Rikka wondering about that, I spent most of the evening and the next day thinking about it too. Rikka still looked displeased like yesterday, but at least she talked a bit today. After the morning greeting, she said two or three words before finishing.

And as usual, Rikka turned around during each break and said something. Not every hour like Isshiki said, but it was our usual pattern. It was relieving that she didn't miss it even once.

Before I knew it, it was after school. Suddenly it became a bit more difficult to talk. Again, I had to ignore this anxiety and find something to chat with her about. It was just difficult. Of course, there's the possibility I could leave without saying anything to her. If I did that, it would continue a vicious cycle of ignoring each other though.

That's why I spoke to her. "Rikka, what do you want to do today? Stay at the school?" She responded in her usual way by looking back at me. I felt relieved. However, that relief was not to last once I heard what she said.

"Sure. There's something I want to talk about with you today, Yuuta."

"What do you want to talk about?" As soon as I heard that phrase, my heart started beating rapidly. What could it be... My mind was going wild with possibilities.

No, I don't want to think about it. If I continued imagining things, I wouldn't be able to ask her about it. Just hearing that she wants to talk is enough... but what would she want to talk about?

Is it that? My anxiety continued to build.

"Um, before that, I want to return a book to the library. It's due today."

"Ah, o, okay." Already, I'm starting to respond clumsily because of that anxiety.

"I'll be back soon." Rikka grabbed a hardcover book from her bag and stood up.

"Ah, umm, I'll go with you." It sounded like I didn't want to be separated from her.

“It’s all right. I’ll be back very soon.”

“Oh. All right. I understand.”

“I’m off.” Rikka left the classroom, leaving me alone. In any case, what did she want to talk about? All I could think about were negative things. Maybe she wanted to break up... That would be the worst thing I could think of.

Oh... I was feeling so pessimistic that all I could think about were bad outcomes. Left alone, they just seemed to start coming faster and faster. I just can’t sit here by myself...

“It’s, it’s not like I’m going to kill myself because I miss her so much...” I murmured to myself.

And then I did something not so cool. I stood up and turned towards the library. There wasn’t anyone in the hallway; it was so silent, those negative thoughts kept coming back.

I shouldn’t be doing this (I might have a persecution complex). Agh. I shook those thoughts out of my head and walked down the hallway. The library is on the second floor. Trying to avoid anyone seeing me, I quickly walked down the stairs.

And then... When I was at the landing between the second and third floors, I unexpectedly ran into Shichimiya. Today, both of us said “Ah!” at this random event. For me, this was an accident, but it looked like it was different for Shichimiya. She looked prepared to meet me here.

“Yo, Hero. Fate has brought us together again! ★” She smiled lightly at me. Was it my imagination, or was this like the first time we met? She was using the same tone. *Déjà vu*? No, something was different, but I couldn’t tell what.

“Yeah... fate... You’re dressed up again... Well, you never said you wouldn’t come back, but you didn’t expose yourself today.”

“Nyahaha! I always have to prepare for battle with Rikka-chan! She’s always in battle mode!”

“You’re still not through fighting...”

“That’s right! Rikka-chan’s a good rival for me. She’s the textbook definition of one!”

“Well, considering she only fights with you, yeah, she’s your rival.” In chuunibyou battles, that is. She fights with me too, in other meanings of the word. So in other words, she only fights with those she gets along well with?

I don’t know what Rikka thinks about Shichimiya, but she might say she’s her rival. Perhaps they’re already starting to feel like friends. Once Rikka understands that they’re rivals, perhaps they could start a wonderful friendship.

But that might just be me hoping too much. Rikka... Right. Maybe that’s what she was going to talk with me about. They’re not rivals, they’re good friends! Why she couldn’t say it before, I don’t know. Well, maybe they need to speak in battle...

“Hero, you’re not looking so hot today. For some reason it looks like your ambition or your aura is gone. Your eyes look dead.”

While I had entered isolated delusion mode, Shichimiya began to look worried. Apparently I have no ambitions while in delusion mode.

“Ah... probably from a lack of sleep. A lot of things happened yesterday and I couldn’t get any rest.”

“Hmm. Hero, this is why training is important.”

“... Well, things happened.” I sighed. I don’t have any self-confidence, even when I’m just talking to myself. This problem with Rikka has really gotten to me.

“Anyways, I’m sorry, but I’ve got to go. I can’t stick around today.”

“What? Why?!”

“I’ve got some things to do today.” Well, the only thing I’ve got to do is talk with Rikka, but make no mistake, that’s probably the most important thing I could do.

“...” Shichimiya, surprisingly, didn’t budge. It was as if she was objecting to what I had to say. Usually she’d say something cool here.

I apologized. “What’s wrong? You look unexpectedly sullen. Today’s absolutely impossible, but maybe tomorrow will be okay.” I couldn’t say anything else to her. Right now was a bad time.

Shichimiya moved beside me and stopped. She grabbed onto my left arm. “Don’t go to the Fallen Angel! If you go Hero, I can’t win.” Her voice was quiet and serious. Before she looked sullen, but now she just seemed expressionless.

“Well, umm...” I didn’t know how to respond to this new Shichimiya. Her actions were perplexing. In short, I was so confused, I couldn’t say anything.

Behind us, there was the sound of someone approaching: footsteps. I didn’t realize someone was looking. As such, I wasn’t prepared for what we looked like. That’s how Rikka saw us. This situation was definitely a misunderstanding.

When my eyes met Rikka’s, she looked astoundingly—no. Horribly sad.

“...”

She made no sound as I looked at her, then she turned around and walked away.

At the spur of the moment, I cried out, “Wa- WAIT!” I wanted to run after her, but I was still restrained. My only option was to use my right hand to free my arm.

“Sorry Shichimiya. I’ve got to go.”

I could hear Shichimiya’s response right after I started to run. It was clear.

“I knew it.”

Her quiet voice had reached my ears. I didn’t ask what it meant. I just looked back as I ran after Rikka.



As you’d expect, I lost sight of her and couldn’t catch up. She’s faster than I am. She had run up the stairs on the other side of the second floor corridor, so she was probably heading to our classroom.

Rikka had already been in the classroom for a few seconds before I could catch up with her. She had grabbed her bag in such a hurry that it twisted around her hand, and she was leaving. I rushed over to the other door and grabbed her arm.

“Hah, hah... I said wait...”

She cried out “I shall not wait!” There were tears around her eye. So different from usual. Seeing her teary face and hearing her cry, I couldn’t say anything.

Instead, Rikka continued. “You forgot our contract, Yuuta!”

“... How did I forget it?! I properly memorized it!”

“Liar! You forgot your contract with me! That’s why... that’s why...”

“You’re wrong! I don’t have that kind of relationship with Shichimiya! How many times do I have to say it?! We’re just friends!”

My voice spontaneously got louder. I wasn’t angry, but I just wanted her to understand what I meant at any costs, so I spoke louder than usual. If I was angry, it wasn’t at Rikka. It was at myself.

Rikka looked incredibly sad upon hearing my raised voice. I was really an idiot. But how could I tell her to believe me... I wouldn’t dream of lying to her even once. I love Rikka more than anyone else in the whole world. That hasn’t changed even slightly. And somehow, it seems to have gotten past her!

“Yu... Yuuta! It... It’s all right if you want to be with her...”

“.....”

She broke free with all of her strength.

Her words, her free arm, the whole situation put me into shock. By the time I recovered, I could see Rikka’s bow as she ran away.

How long had it been? I don’t know. The silence grew. I’m sure I looked awful. I went over to a window in the classroom to check, and I could see how horrible I looked in its reflection.

We had a fight. An argument, dispute, whatever you want to call it...

Feebly, I sat in my seat. If you said that I felt like I had no strength whatsoever, you’d be right. I felt empty. Despair and grief were coming around the corner. All of these emotions kept going around inside me, such that I couldn’t gather the strength to move my body. It felt useless to even try.

Ah, what was wrong with Shichimiya? The thought crossed my mind, but it instantly disappeared. My mind went right into a flashback of our fight. Ah!

Why won't that go away? Everything kept going around in my head. It felt so clustered. My consciousness felt muddy.

I checked my watch, and all of a sudden it was 17:00. How did it get so late? Maybe time stopped for me since our argument, or maybe time just flew by since then. I don't have a way to check. The one thing I know for sure is that I'm the only one in the classroom.

I shook my head trying to wake up.

Are you all right, Rikka? Did you reach your apartment? Or are you still here? No, if you're upset or crying, you'd want to go home. That's how she is right now. Upset or crying. I don't know which. Why couldn't she understand... Why did she think things were different... Why was she so unhappy..... I don't know anything at all.

Well, if we're looking at who to put the blame on... it's not Rikka's fault. I'm the one who's said and did things wrongly. I just didn't recognize it. To that extent, it lies with me.

Shichimiya is a friend. That's why I didn't think anything of her coming back. And then things just kept going downhill. My awareness became befuddled, my emotions became befuddled, and I couldn't straighten things out. I kept losing ground in this situation.

We fought, so there's only one thing I should do. I need to apologize.

How? Chase after Rikka? Apologize with Shichimiya? Make a new contract? While any of those options would be good, they're not the right way. Nothing's coming to mind and so, I can't apologize to her right now. While running to Rikka's apartment and apologizing might sound good, it doesn't feel like it's what I should do.

I suddenly looked up at the clock on the wall. It was time for students to leave the building. I became aware that it was starting to become dim outside. Little by little, the sky was echoing my emotions. The lack of lighting was somewhat soothing. I remember Rikka saying something about being under the disappearance of a bright sky.

Well, should I go home...?

After some internal debate, I stood up, grabbed my bag and exited the classroom. It was a bit too much for me to lock the door, so pardon me. I can't do anything today.



I left the school by myself. Recently, I've always left with Rikka, so this really felt uncomfortable. Oh... it feels so nice walking with someone... Now that I can say I've experienced the difference, I can believe it. Man, this day keeps giving me this horrible aftertaste.

As I kept thinking these complaints, I walked toward the gate. The absolute final bell to go home gives you one of the worst feelings you could have. It makes you want to go home as soon as possible. I looked around at the dim surroundings as I trudged toward the gate.

No one else was around. The fields were empty, and probably everyone who was in a club was gone. There might have been one or two teachers in the staff room, though. Ugh, I can't even stop thinking about how alone I am right now. I recomposed myself and continued to walk onward.

As I reached the gate, I heard a girl's voice. I looked towards the light and saw some students talking idly, in a daze. Thoughts about how I wasn't the only one still wandering around floated through my head. Oh well, let's go home.

"Oh, you're by yourself today Gerzoni. That's weird." And a voice came to me. Huh? Gerzoni? That's not my name... I looked back and, yep, that was Nibutani and her friends. Not a pleasant sight to see...

"Ah... Looks like it. It's been that kind of day."

"What? Did you two have a fight?"

The two girls beside Nibutani, Sasa and Miyoshi, had the same reaction to Nibutani's smiling question. "Seriously? That married couple?"

... I've let it leak out. Well, at least hearing those two's question made me feel a little better. But really, what I want is for Rikka to hear that as well and see her reaction.

"Shut up, shut up, shut up. Leave me alone..."

"Well, do you know now how horrible it feels for a couple to fight? It's natural to feel this way."

"I knew that beforehand..."

"Then don't do it!" Nibutani assertively replied. She continued, "Well, wouldn't it be better if you apologize, even if you feel bad? You do feel bad, don't you?"

"..." I couldn't say anything. But hearing someone say something to me made me realize that I did feel awful. I hadn't been able to sort out my feelings. It's still not Rikka's fault. I know that much, but I can't say it yet. There's still some time for me to go before I could apologize. It's probably me being selfish again.

Shichimiya... isn't the person I love. She was my progenitor, the person I admired, my benefactor, a cool person, but that was then. She's not that to me now.

Rikka is. But for some reason, that didn't occur to me.

"Well, why don't you think things over?"

"All right. I will. Thanks for the advice. Later."

Of course, that was Nibutani. Sasa and Miyoshi also said bye. I turned around and started to walk home.

At that time, something struck my eye. Usually I don't pay attention to my surroundings as much as I should, but this particular bag got my attention. It was one from our school.

There wasn't anything strange about it, but someone put this bag down by the gate. Perhaps one of Nibutani's friends sat it down while they went to the bathroom, but why does this make me feel uncomfortable?

No, it's more foreboding. My breathing quickened as I picked up the bag. My breaths came out rough, my pulse sped up. It was because I noticed something I didn't see before.

This bag was frightening. Oh god, it's so frightening. I already said it before, but believe me when I say this bag was foreboding.

That's because of the ribbon I saw.

That ribbon, if you don't remember... was a present from me...

Though I was breathing hard, I could still think. The solution was simple. This bag... was Rikka's.

Chapter 8 : I Don't Want to Love You

What's going on? Why is her bag here?

I turned around and listened. Listened. I didn't hear anything. With a hoarse voice, I asked, "When... was this bag put here?"

All three girls answered at the same time. "Huh?" The one to really answer my question was Miyoshi. "Wasn't it here when we got here? Shinka was here waiting for us, and it was already there before she arrived. That was about thirty minutes ago. I wondered who would've left it there, but I left it alone since they probably went to the bathroom and dropped it. And there you have it."

"It's been at least thirty minutes since it was left there?" Rikka was supposed to have gone home... right? My sense of danger increased. I could hear my heartbeat more clearly than anything around me.

This was déjà vu from the time Rikka left before. On our class trip she had suddenly disappeared. Remember? It was that time when we couldn't return to school without her.

But... This was strange. Why would she just leave her bag? There was no reason.

"Wait a minute, what's going on?" That was Nibutani. What's going on? Should I say something? No, I might be jumping to an incorrect conclusion. Besides, she's a worrywart. I don't want Sasa or Miyoshi to worry too. It'll be fine to leave it alone... right?

"Nothing to be concerned over. Thanks for telling me. Thirty minutes, huh? They've probably forgotten about it. I'll take it to the staffroom."

Nibutani replied "Ah, yeah we should do that. Want me to go? I was the one who found it first." Miyoshi added, "Hand it to me," and stuck out her hand.

“That’s alright. I’ve got some free time. Besides, it’s getting dark outside. You should go home. Later.” Having said that, they shouldn’t be suspicious. I grabbed the bag and left the girls.

Now then, I don’t have any proof something’s wrong, but I shouldn’t waste any time.

What was going on? Was this a prank by Rikka?

Or did something happen to her? Do I just immediately think something’s gone wrong? Nah, I just jump to conclusions.

I headed towards the shoe lockers. Around there, I could investigate with the remaining lighting. There might be a clue somewhere.

Checking the bag, I couldn’t find any kind of clue though her cell phone was in there. Damn... I had a bad feeling about this. I didn’t have the feeling she escaped or went to the demon world, though. Obviously...

“Hey, is that bag Takanashi-san’s?”

Abruptly, I heard someone behind me. It was Nibutani. “Huh? Weren’t you going home?”

“I am. But it’s your fault that they’ve misunderstood what’s going on. They asked me ‘Do you like Geruzoni?’ What should I do?”

“What should you do... well, what can I do?”

“Something’s wrong. Shouldn’t you scold and ask me, ‘Hey, why are those guys calling me that?!’ For them I just said, ‘It’s, It’s not like I like him or something’ and they seemed to find that acceptable, so things are alright.”

“Why are you trying to sound like a tsundere?!”

“Now that you’re able to make a comeback, why don’t you tell me what’s happening?” Before I knew it, Nibutani had helped me regain my composure. Or... could she have known that this was Rikka’s bag all along?

Perhaps she saw through me and started to worry without saying anything to her friends. I’m no match for her...

“... I’m sorry for lying.”

“Nah, don’t apologize. I like how interesting you look, but it’s not good for you to be so easy to read. Now, what’s going on?”

“Rikka’s not here.”

Nibutani’s face fell. She asked, “Do you know what happened?”

I know the first part of this chain of events. We got into a fight. Since then, I don’t know what happened. But I know that even though we were fighting, she wouldn’t disappear leaving her bag behind. Thus someone must have done something to her.

As I was thinking about that, something flew through my mind. When we were on our date... That’s right! Rikka got tangled up with that strange guy. “What if that guy...”

“Guy...? Oh, that’s right; Natsuno said that there was a strange guy by the gate this morning.”

“What?”

“I didn’t hear the details, but the girls said there was a perverted guy by the gate. One look would ruin your morning.”

... It’s possible. Back then, I’m sure Rikka gave her name and, yes, our school name to that guy. It’s possible he had his eyes on her, and waited until

there weren't many people around after school before kidnapping her. That sounds right.

He confirmed where Rikka was in the morning, and then he waited until no one was around to see him, huh? Then why did he leave the bag? Perhaps he had to act hastily so that no one could see him, and he left it behind.

What was his goal? I don't know why he would kidnap her. I know he had his eye on her, but how would that lead to kidnapping her?

I guess I don't know the criminal after all... Without a motive, we can't suspect anyone...

Damn it... This is all because of that fight... If we hadn't fought... then she would... it's my fault... Rikka is...

Regret. Guilt. Mourn, Lament. No recovery in sight.

"Huh? You don't think she was... kidnapped?"

"... I don't know, but that is a possibility."

"Why would someone do something so clumsy as that?!"

"I don't know if it's true. And if it is, I don't know why. I know that there was a strange guy when Rikka and I were on our date. It might be him. He had his eyes on her."

"Wa, wait! Then call the police!"

"Tha... That's..." Impatient. Scared. And yet, I wasn't feeling either of those emotions. Nibutani being here probably saved me. If I were by myself, I probably would've self-destructed and done nothing.

I picked up my cell phone. Trembling, I dialed 1, 1, and then the moment I pressed 0, my phone began to shake. There was no ringing, but on the display was a number I didn't know. Should I take it?

There's nothing good about a call at this time. I pressed the receive call button and timidly prepared myself.

"Hello?"

"Hey there. Heh heh. Togashi-kun, right?" I'll remember that. Some stranger knowing your name is scary. As for the quality, I couldn't tell if he was using something to change his voice. I wasn't able to tell if it was that same guy we met before. Hesitantly, I continued.

"Who is this?"

"Come on, you're supposed to know who I am. Don't tell me you don't remember."

I knew it... It's that guy... Calm yourself down, and just continue...

"What are you trying to do?"

"... Hey now, that's quite aggressive. I'm sure you already know, but I've got two hostages here. You shouldn't forget that."

"... I understand."

"Let's see. Don't call the police. If you agree, then they'll stay safe, capiche?"

"... I understand."

"Nice and obedient, aren'tcha? Now then, what am I trying to do? Well, really I just can't stand you."

Can't stand me...? Does he hold a grudge against me? Was it because I called him a pervert that time...?

“But for now, I’ll ignore that feeling. Besides, I’m quite pleased with Rikka-chan. You two were dating? Heh heh, did you hate dating her? Well, then I’ll just win her from you.”

“... Stop it! Don’t do that... please!”

“Hey now, you’ve wised up! Remember, I’ve got two hostages. If you’re smart, they’ll stay safe. Now, to change the subject, do you like games?”

“... Games?”

“Yes, games. Do you like game-like things? RPGs are my favorite type of game. I like some card games too. I like motion games, some like basketball, and some child games like hide-and-seek. That’s why I’m going to play a game with you. The rules are simple. If you find Rikka-chan by tomorrow morning, then you win. If you don’t, then she’s mine.”

What is he thinking? I can’t tell what he’s planning. What... is this supposed to accomplish? And yet... what do I do now?

“Heh, got your hopes up? Even if you find me, I’ll squish you like a bug. I’m not your ordinary kidnapper. You might say I take great joy in the misery of my victims. I can’t wait to see how you react. Feeling enjoyment, sneering, trampling, driving you to despair, and then destroying you.”

This is the worst choice of words. If I get angry, I won’t be able to think... I’m trying to rack my brains... but if I get upset, he won’t return Rikka. She won’t come back!

I’d have to put up with the thought that she might die. What would I do? Get angry, rage, regret? Probably all of them. I’d withstand them all. I’ve drawn blood from my lips and my fists, but neither of them hurt. What hurts is my heart.

“... I understand. I’m prepared to find her.”

“Heh, this will be fun. But this is a Demolish Game. I really like this game, so I’ll give you a hint.”

“A hint?”

“That’s right. Heh, well, a hint gives you hope. That hope will mean you go further into despair after you lose. It’s so much fun. Now then, the hint I’ll give you, that bit of hope is: ‘I don’t want to love you.’”

“... What kind of hint was that?”

“Like it? That hint was meant to demolish any hope you had. Aren’t I a bad guy? Heh, shouldn’t you start thinking now? The game’s already begun. I’ll get in touch with you once it’s finished.”

Call dropped. Damn it. I can’t go searching for her now!

“Ho, hold it! Who called? Was it the kidnapper? Call the police!”

Nibutani stopped. Once she saw my face, she stepped back. Not only did her expression fall, but so did her heart, it seemed. It also stopped her voice.

“Would you like to wipe away... that blood?” She held out some tissues. Ah— I hardly noticed before, but now I can taste iron.

“Thanks. I’ll take them.”

“... It’s pointless if you don’t calm yourself down. Don’t speak, let me say something. Takanashi-san may be your beloved girlfriend, but she’s also my friend as well.”

“... I didn’t think you had that relationship.”

“We had extra lessons together, of course we’re friends! Besides, I’m friends with everyone in the class! There’s not a single person I don’t like!”

That was a pure Nibutani response. Perhaps how a leader would respond. It's the class rep that everyone likes. If she wasn't there, then the whole class wouldn't come together.

"I can't say we're a happy pair, but she's not a person I hate."

I couldn't help laughing at that. Laughing, yes; even in a state like this, she miraculously made me laugh.

"Hey! You think I'm a hypocrite? Then we're a fighting couple! I'm the type of person who fights with her friends. I'll even fist-fight them! Pow-pow!"

"Ahaha, that's hilarious! Shall we change your name to the Friend-Making King?"

"Lame! I don't like that at all! I'm the Class King!"

Well, it is out of date. To be honest, the Class King image isn't that cool either. I like it, though. Back to the story.

"The guy told me not to talk to the police."

"Are you serious? Are you an idiot?"

I might be idiotic at times, but he specifically told me he took pleasure in the reactions of his victims. I could feel his sneer through the call. I also wanted to be safe.

After all, he's not after Rikka. He's after me.

"So he said he's playing a game. Well, it's probably hopeless. We have until tomorrow morning. That's about ten hours. But, if we find her, then there's no problem."

"Really? Then should we contact the police? What if they can't find her?"

"Huh? There's no problem if we find her." Nibutani looked at me strangely. Did I say something weird?

"It's pointless if you're just saying stupid things. That's fine. I'll call them."

"No, please don't. It's just intuition, but that timing was too good. I think he might be tracking our movements."

"... Then that means..." Reluctantly, it seemed she understood what was going on. The kidnapper knew where we were.

Thinking about it, he could be spying on us or had bugged us. If it's the former, then he has to either be nearby or looking at us from a high place via telescope. It's unlikely they pulled up in a car and drove to some hidden place. If it's bugging, then that could explain why the bag was left. Looks like I need to go through the bag again.

Thanks to Nibutani, I've been able to keep my cool and think. But unless I can get another clue to that place, I won't be able to go there. First things first, let's search the bag again.

"Hey, did the kidnapper give you any clues? Did he say anything?"

I continued to search the bag while I replied to Nibutani. As expected, there wasn't any wiretap. "Ah, he did. He called it a hint. 'I don't want to love you.'"

"... I don't want to love you? What kind of hint..."

"I don't know either. Well, to be honest, we don't even know if it's a hint." Nibutani looked like she would collapse from my response. In comparison, I felt good enough to stand up. All right, how long can I run around?"

"Shouldn't you think about this a little more? Are you an idiot?"

“Well, it’s not that I don’t want to think about it... I just think it’d be better if I went around and searched for her. I might find something.”

“You might find something, huh? Isn’t that what every abduction victim goes through?”

“Oh...” Once she said that, I realized I was being impatient. At any rate, I didn’t want to just sit around here.

“‘I don’t want to love you.’ It’s cynical, but I don’t think it’s just a simple negative thought. If it’s a hint, there’s got to be some meaning to it.” She gave me a sideways glance as she thought it out. She’s the brains of this operation.

“Ah, but it’s a really cynical phrase. He said that hints could be called hope. If you have hope, then the amount of despair you’ll feel increases.”

“Hints are hope. That’s a really unpleasant way to say it. Did he say anything else?” Nibutani was very stern.

I tried to remember the conversation I had with him. “He said his purpose was that he couldn’t stand me. After that, didn’t he say that he liked RPGs the best? Then there were card games, basketball, and motion games. Lastly he said he liked hide-and-seek. I get the impression this is a game of hide-and-seek.”

“Hmm? Games, huh? And I don’t want to love you. Do you think there’s a link between love and games? Or was it just making conversation?”

He seemed to treat love like a game. He’s the worst kind of guy. Once again, anger entered my heart as I thought about him.

“I don’t want to love you... I don’t want to love you... It’s no use. Nothing’s coming to mind.”

“... OK. Did he say anything else, either after the hint or before anything else?”

“Let’s see. How did he say this? Malicious? He sounded like he wanted me to think about it immediately...”

Somehow Nibutani understood what I was saying, and she said something surprising. “I might know what’s going on.” Nibutani’s face was smiling, both with joy and encouragement for her despairing friend.

Chapter 9: Demon Duchess

Usually this door is supposed to be shut, and that's just how it was when we arrived. Given how calm I felt, it's amazing just how impatient and paranoid I was a short while ago. I didn't even feel angry. Instead, I was rather calm. It was probably because we found this place.

You see, this is where we think the kidnapper is. If we're right... then we have to open this door at any cost. It's supposed to be shut, so the right answer is to open it. I put my hand on the handle and then pulled with all my might.

The door opened.

"Anyone here? Show yourself!" My voice resounded in the dimly lit area. Not surprising when you consider we're in a gym. The power was cut, so the only light was the moon coming in from the window. It was only bright around those areas.

Step. Step. I walked into the gym. Almost immediately, a voice came from the darkness. "You're much faster than I expected." I couldn't tell if that voice was surprised or prepared, but I knew who it was. I looked towards the darkness to see if I could make out their figure, but I couldn't exactly confirm that it was them.

"I won't lose this game to you." Their voice continued on, somewhat bitterly. "I'd like to say 'at last, the Hero has arrived.' But you're not alone, are you? I wanted to have a one-on-one battle to finish this." After this, the Demon Duchess—no, Satone Shichimiya stepped into the light.

She had a melancholy smile on her face as she asked, "Why are you here, Mori-sama?"

"I'm heading home. Looks like this is something you guys have to settle. See ya later."

"You are? Well, it is our problem, but I'm sad. I wanted to talk a little more with you, Mori-sama." Shichimiya feebly smiled. "Well, Mori-sama was the one miscalculation I had in my plans."

"Where's Rikka? Return her."

"Bit hasty, aren't you? Have you forgotten that Rikka-chan's my hostage?"

"I haven't forgotten, but if it's you Shichimiya, then I don't believe you'll do anything other than take her hostage."

"... Your faith in me is funny. I'm the kidnapper. But that's Hero for you. Really, you are a Hero."

I thought it over, and then repeated myself to her. "Even if you kidnapped her, you're still Shichimiya. You won't ever change."

"Nyahaha... that's what a Hero would think. But too bad. Rikka-chan's not here."

"What?! Where is she?!"

Shichimiya locked eyes with me and replied, "She's in a place that will ensure she remains safe. While I can't tell you where she is, I can assure you she's fine. It's just like I said to you before. This is a game."

I listened to her reply, but, "I know. But now that it's over, return Rikka to me. I'll tell you what Nibuntani figured out, so that should be enough to win the game."

"Naturally. So, tell me Mori-sama's great reasoning." Shichimiya had a smile that showed she was entertained. She wasn't laughing; she was just entertained.

“It was because of the ‘I don’t want to love you’ hint. She immediately understood what it was.”

“Oh, I knew I miscalculated, having her around. I figured if she wasn’t around we’d be on an even level in this game. If you would’ve been upset, we could’ve had an equal playing ground.”

“... That so? I was completely lost by your hint. It was Nibutani who was able to figure out your hint ‘I don’t want to love you’ (恋願うな) or in other words ‘I beg you not.’ (希うな) But that’s still not right. ‘I ask you not’ (冀うな) would be the most correct³, but that wasn’t your entire hint. The other part of your hint was the term ‘hope.’ (希望) Combining these two gives us the actual hint: another way to say ‘hope’ (冀望).”

Nibutani knew this well. This was meant to be a word game. Naturally, the one who taught her about these pairs was Shichimiya. The phrases “I want to love you” and “I ask you” are similar enough that you’d forget it after the conversation was over. Nibutani, however, thought it was cute and memorized them.

“Correct.”

“Then, the next step was to break down these characters. North (北), Strange (異), and Full Moon (望). Yet it’s not just that pattern. It’s ‘North, different, can’t see it..’ (北,異なる,望む,な) The final piece was when you said ‘shouldn’t you start thinking now?’ That particular place had meaning. ‘Now, north, to a different place you don’t see’ or basically ‘go north now.’ North of where Nibutani and I were located happened to be here: the gym.”

That’s why she called at that specific time.

³ The way to pronounce all three of these phrases are the same in Japanese.

“Super correct. I thought it might be a little too heavy-handed, but I didn’t know how it would end up in this game. But that wasn’t a hint after all, was it...”

“I know that too.”

I was in the middle of saying more, but she interrupted me. Shichimiya was smiling pleasantly. “Oh?” It was like she wanted me to recognize it. I continued,

“From the beginning, if I were calm, then I would know instantly and wouldn’t have any misunderstandings. If you were a possibility as the kidnapper, then I’d know instantly where you were. Well, honestly, the possibility of you being the culprit was 0 to me, but the moment your name came into my head as the kidnapper, I would know exactly where you were. It’s a bit of long explanation though.”

“You remembered it, didn’t you?” Standing out and visible was Shichimiya blush. Even in the faint moonlight, you could clearly see her reddened cheeks. Even in this serious setting, she was rosy.

“... I did commit it to memory. I knew everything you liked, so once you said hide-and-seek, I knew you’d be in the gym. The one who solved the Shichimiya Disappearance event was me.”

That’s right. I just talked about that first year story recently.

“Thank you... It makes me happy to hear you say that.”

“... To that extent, I know you, Shichimiya. That whole first year in middle school was a very important year for me.”

“Nyahahah, then be with me, if the time spent with me was the most important time for you.” Shichimiya spoke as if she couldn’t calm herself down. She went on:

“Well, enough about that. Yes, the entire call was a hint. But it went just as planned. Our levels are even. ‘I don’t want to love you’ was a difficult problem to figure out, but I thought you could possibly come to that conclusion once you calmed down. Regardless, I decided to fool you by making a fake random call. You don’t usually get those, do you?”

Now she hit a sore spot. I definitely thought “it’s that guy” even before she called. Truthfully, I was feeling incredibly angry at that time, so my memory might be incorrect. I have to correct her.

“Ugh. Unfortunately, I had the chance to meet someone before who could have been the kidnapper.”

“I didn’t know about that. That must have been a chance event. I did think you were side tracking the conversation a bit much, Hero.”

“... I thought you said chances build upon each other to make fate, Shichimiya. Was this a test for me? Let me ask you something then. Why? Why did you go through with this?”

“...” Shichimiya was silent. Instead of saying words, she took one step forward. Another. She continued to narrow the gap between us. And then, she stopped about ten centimeters in front of me and looked up.

“Hero—no, Yuuta. It’s because I’m in love with you.”

She confessed, trembling. She admitted that this might make Rikka-chan upset at her. Even though tears were falling down her face, she smiled.

“Nyahaha, I may be a Demon Duchess, but I’m still a girl! ★”

... I heard her voice clearly, but there was nothing I could say that wouldn’t sound insensitive. Really. I was shocked, but what could I say to her? What could I say that wouldn’t hurt her feelings?

Since I couldn't say anything, Shichimiya continued, feebly. "It's all right if you can't say anything. I already know what you'd say... Hero, back then I couldn't tell you my feelings, so I made up things. But in the end, they were just fake stories. Love is much more difficult than delusions."

"..." I wanted to respond that I felt similar back then, but those words wouldn't come out. I couldn't say them properly.

"That's why I'm jealous of Rikka-chan. This may sound horrible to say about her, but she and I are alike. That's why it's so horrible. I was so jealous, it was disgraceful." She paused and looked away towards the moon.

When she was able to collect herself, she continued. "I was shocked that I could be so jealous. And then yesterday, when I saw you two happily eating in the classroom, I knew that I could never win. It hurt so much. I wanted to destroy your relationship. I've loved you for so long, yet why wasn't I beside you? That's why, as a Demon Duchess, I kidnapped the princess."

It was dark, but I could still see her shivering body. That's when I knew it. She wasn't speaking as a Demon Duchess, but as an ordinary girl.

"... And that's why you kidnapped her and played this game...?"

Shichimiya turned around. "It's not like that. The real game is between Rikka-chan and me. No, it's not a game at all. It was a threat."

"A threat...?"

"Yes. The whole kidnapping and hostage situation was between Rikka-chan and me. What I call a hostage was Rikka-chan's precious scrunchie. Not wanting to lose it, she asked for it back. Naturally, I turned her down."

... She immediately rejected her? That's... not like her at all. As soon as she saw how I reacted, Shichimiya began to cry again. She continued,

“That’s exactly right. To take this one piece of cloth and threaten her with it was an incredible stroke of genius. It was the absolute best hostage that I could threaten Rikka-chan with, and I didn’t know it. She pleaded with me so cutely. ‘That’s incredibly important to me. Stop it!’”

Shichimiya pulled out the present I gave Rikka and held it in front of her eyes. Those eyes appeared misty, no, muddled. Her tears were continuing to fall.

“And so I hit on a great idea. I thought I could use this. I could use this as a bargaining point to get Rikka to agree with me on something. That was this game we played. What did I say when I called you? If I win, I get Rikka-chan. Didn’t I say something like that?”

“... No , what’s going on?”

“Oh, you’ve always been bad at understanding other people’s feelings Hero. I said to her ‘If Hero comes to save you, you win. I’ll set it free. If Hero doesn’t come, I win. You and Hero will break up.’... And then she immediately replied, ‘That’s fine. Yuuta will definitely come to save me.’”

She said that? She... really believed in me, huh? I really need to apologize to her. I need to find her, apologize, and then thank her. I need to show her my gratitude for believing in me.

“Really... I was no match for her... I couldn’t beat her... Rikka-chan is really the strongest.”

“Yeah, Rikka is the strongest.” That’s what I love about her. And now, she’s my girlfriend. Now I need to say something to Shichimiya. It’s inevitable at this point. It might hurt her, but I have to properly convey how I feel.

“That’s why I love her. She’s my girlfriend. Sorry, Shichimiya. I’m happy you feel this way, but I can’t return your feelings.”

“... Nyahaha, I already knew that... I love that about you. You’re straight to the point. Shining. Radiant. Cool. To me, you’re really a hero.”

“... I think that about you, too. I also admire you.” I couldn’t say anything else. Maybe, just maybe, if we stayed together, I might’ve loved her. Admiration, cool, and then love. But that’s a “what if.” That “what if” will never be, now.

“... I’m so envious of Rikka-chan. I thought that one day you’d say that Agapenikku Over Burst to me. Will you say that to her one day? You’d only say such a cool line to the girl you love. But it looks like I won’t know that pleasure.”

“... Sure.” As I said that short line to Shichimiya, she turned around and slowly walked away from me, into the moonlight.

“Hey, Hero.” Shichimiya turned back towards me in a confrontation pose. Her tone was different than how she was speaking before. Her voice wasn’t shaking; it was clear. “Are you going to try and make up with Rikka-chan?”

“Naturally.”

“Nyahaha! Then we move to round two, Hero! ★”

“What are you talking about? That’s not what you promised.”

“Hero, have you forgotten? Once you defeat a Demon Duchess, it’s not over. There’s always a battle with the second form. You said you’ll make up with Rikka-chan, but where is she? Her location is inside my head. You won’t be able to find her if I don’t tell you. Act like you want to. You can find her, but only if you beat me.”

Shichimiya had the smile of a real Demon Duchess. Actually, everything was just like she was a Demon Duchess. Speech, posture, readiness, everything had that final boss feel.

“Naturally, if you beat me, I’ll tell you where Rikka-chan is. I promise.”

“And what if I lose?”

“Right, that could happen. Then if I win...” Thanks to the moonlight, I could see her close her eyes. As she took a deep breath, her smile hid her heartbreak. That’s how I knew what she would say before she said it. “... you’ll break up with Rikka-chan.” She sounded bitter.

I too instinctively knew what my reply would be. It might’ve come out unconsciously.

“I understand. Then... by all means, I shall not lose.”

“... Rikka-chan had the same reply, didn’t she? ★”

“Well, that’s just how it is. How about I add something? If I win, you promise to do something else.”

“Oh? All right. Not an equal trade, but oh well. As long as I know what it is.”

“Then... if I win, you’ll apologize to Rikka.” I really want Shichimiya to apologize to her. If you do something horrible to someone, you have to apologize to them.

“Nyahaha... If it’s that, then of course. If the Hero wins, I’ll immediately go and apologize to Rikka. It’ll be Demon Duchess style! ★”

“... Okay. That’s fine. So, how are we going to fight?”

“Ah, don’t you remember, Hero? Our style of fights is Hero versus Demon Duchess.”

“I haven’t forgotten.” Basically, Shichimiya and I would battle chuunibyou style (or in reality play make-believe) while shouting out crazy terms. It was fun.

“Right now it’s 50-50. Sure you don’t want to give up?”

“...”

Honestly, I didn’t know what would be a good reply. I don’t have any special powers. That’s right; my powers were sealed, so I can’t use the flames of darkness any more. I don’t know if I can really win this battle.

Yet, it would be all right for me to unseal my powers to fight the Shichimiya I care about, to fight for the Rikka I love. I’m also Rikka’s contractee. I can’t run away as the contractee of Rikka the Strongest.

Resolved, I once again asked for confirmation from Shichimiya. “Just making sure, there’s no other way you’ll tell me where Rikka is, right?”

“Nyahaha, nope! ★”

With how solidly she answered me, I could feel how resolved she was. It was to be expected. Shichimiya is also straightforward.

“... All right. I accept your challenge. I want you to uphold your promise, though. If I win, you’ll properly apologize to her.”

“I know. All right, the rules are the same as before: battle until someone gives up. You win, I’ll tell you where Rikka-chan is and apologize. I win, you’ll break up with Rikka. That right?”

“Correct.”

Shichimiya adopted a battle pose. “Then shall we begin?” I adopted the same pose. Only to protect myself, of course.

“One more thing. Were you serious when you called me?”

“Phone call? Ah, the one with Hero? Yes, I was serious. I’m quite pleased with Rikka-chan. I never thought I’d find someone else like Hero that I could fight

with, but that's all. It's the old cliché: 'Should I be friends with someone so different?'"

"...Then I'll respond stereotypically, too. 'Then you're already friends.'" There's no reason for you to dislike her. But I meant when you said that you were a person who took pleasure in your crimes."

"Ah, that... That is mostly true. I'm really a cruel person, so I wanted you two to break up. That's why I said those terrible words. I should want you to be happy, Hero, but I don't want to. From the beginning, I've just been the Magical Demon Duchess. ★"

"Oh, then I get what you're saying. Are you feeling possessed? Someone might be manipulating you. Leave it to me! I'll set you free!"

Even though she was trying to hide her real motive behind her way of speaking, I still understood what she meant. I got to hear some of her intent. I'm sure her comments about being cruel weren't what she really felt. Nevertheless, it sunk in. I was in high spirits.

"Nyahaha. Always thinking like a Hero! Then, that's it for chatter time. I will defeat you Hero!" Shichimiya took a small step forward and then adopted a pose like she was aiming a bow.

"I'm not going easy on you! Dark Phoenix Blazing Wave!"

"Agh!" I put my arm in front of my body to block. Of course I really couldn't see anything, but my senses were coming back. I may not be able to see her attack, but I can sense it. Delusion powers are fully functional. I really missed these battles. They were so much fun.

But this feels so surreal. I've been able to keep my cool, yet this shouldn't affect me! I'm a former chuunibyou patient! No. I'm now a re-awakened chuunibyou patient! Everything is resonating again!

“Nyahaha! That’s my Hero! I wanted to fight with Hero once again!”

Thanks to my intra-cerebral delusional powers being activated, I could understand the difference in Shichimiya’s tone. “Ah, I too never thought we’d fight like this again!” It was that tone. Was it exactly how it was when we first began to make stories?

“That aside, tonight you’re talking like when we first met. Why are you speaking like that? Didn’t you stop just a little while earlier?”

Shichimiya twitched upon hearing what I said. She stood up and straightened her posture compared to her battle stance. She stopped, and then smiled femininely.

“Nyahahahaha! Looks like Hero saw through me. Should I be happy about that? Should I return to how I was? I’m not going to give up now! ★”

“... No. You won’t give up ... but you’re not going to win, either. You’ve set this up for someone else to win!” This was definitely fishy. From the very beginning, she hasn’t acted like she was going to win. Everything, every single thing she did today from the moment we met this afternoon, was meant for her to lose. The first game (even though she said we were even) was made for me to win. Even this battle was made for me to win. She didn’t make even one possibility where she would win.

That’s not what I want.

“Nyahaha... You’re saying the same thing she did. But the fact is that I could never win against Rikka-chan.”

“Yeah, you wouldn’t win against her. Rikka is the person I love most in my life. There’s no room for you to fit in. But do you understand the difference between not winning and not trying to win? That’s why you’re trying to say ‘come here to win!’ to me.”

It's just like when I said that since I didn't have a reason to fight for the world, I wouldn't fight. You don't fight for your own sake if you don't have a reason to. She's supposed to understand this. I want her to fight for her own sake.

"You're saying such awful things... Idiot Hero."

"I might be an idiot, but I love people who charge straight ahead. That's what I love about you."

"... Nyahahaha! Too bad! Looks like you've angered a Demon Duchess Hero! Well then, I'll get serious. I'll seriously defeat you Hero, and you'll be separated from Rikka-chan! ☆"

"Ah, but it is I who will win!"

"I won't lose either!" Shichimiya shortened the distance between us. She moved instantly, but I couldn't tell due to the darkness. By the time I noticed her motion, she was next to me.

"This is the Magical Demon Duchess's real power. Demon Duchess Fiery Dragon Entrapment!"

At the same time that I heard her line, I felt pain in my abdomen. Shichimiya had landed a big blow with a fist. I wonder what she was thinking to punch me like that. What was she trying to say?

What was she thin...

"Ow..."

Obviously it hurt. Her punches landed enough damage that you'd want to go on all-fours. Still, I had to remain standing. Enduring many repeated blows, I finally said,

“I, I’m not a hero anymore... I can’t use the flames of darkness either. But what I can use are my own flames. The flames of love!”

SO EMBARRASSING! That was so chuuni! But, those were my real feelings. That were my real intentions. I continued, “This is the power I’ve received from Rikka. That’s right, the power of love! Therefore, I am the strongest! What attack can be effective against it? I can take all the blows you send towards me! Too bad. Since I will never surrender, it’s up to you to lose.”

“Nyahaha... A guy in love is so uncool. But, a guy who’s straightforward is allllways cool.” Shichimiya landed another blow on me in the same area.

It didn’t hurt. The only thing that was hurting here was Shichimiya’s heart. Nothing for me could hurt like that.

“Is this a serious Magical Demon Duchess? I can’t feel a thing!”

“Damn it!” She landed another barrage into my abdomen. Left. Right. Left. Right. They continued onward.

But I knew that gradually, gradually, her blows would become weaker. And before long, her speed would go too. Yet she wouldn’t stop. It wouldn’t end.

Endlessly, forever, “Idiot...”

Shichimiya continued to murmur that same word over and over again while tearfully striking my abdomen weakly. “Idiot. Idiot. Idiot.” There was hardly any power behind her fist. How long it went on for, I couldn’t tell.

And then, “Idiot...” Having used up all her strength, Shichimiya added one last word. She looked up and met my gaze. I was focused on those sweet lights.

“Yuuta. I want us to be together.”



I wonder if she's finally making the expression she wants. This confession is different from the first confession she made tonight. I don't know if she's serious, if this is her real motive, or if she's trying to win with this confession, but I can tell by her expression that she's determined.

With feelings of gratitude, I said "Thanks" and bowed my head. "But I'm sorry. I have a girlfriend that I love very much, and who I hope to marry one day. She's my contractor. That's why we can't be together."

"Nyahahaha... I give up. This is beyond what I expected. Ah, damn it, this doesn't mean I surrender, does it?" Shichimiya gave in sweetly, with a smile. And like that, she stopped and looked down. Her body was shaking. Maybe she might have been crying, I don't know.

But, for reasons I can't explain, I reached over and brushed her head. I don't know if it was comforting, but I still wanted to treat her with kindness. For some time, I continued to brush her head.

"Yuuta... Thank you. That's enough. I lost, so I'll tell you where Rikka-chan is."

"Please. Tell me."

"Umm, over there." Shichimiya turned and pointed somewhere. Due to the darkness, I could barely see a storage room. Probably some balls and things were stored in it.

"Huh? What happened?"

"Hmm, nothing's happening? She was confined in there from the beginning, though. There shouldn't have been any time or way for her to move."

... So it was like that. Come to think of it, it was a bit risky to have been in the gymnasium. Anyone should've thought about that risk of hiding her here. It's only natural...

Huh? Then what if....

I had a bad feeling about this. I had been putting off checking on her, so I ran over to the storage room where she was. I threw open the door looking for her and she was... in there.

“Rikkaaaaa!” Her hands were tied behind a volleyball net’s pole so she couldn’t move. Right now she was sitting down beside the pole. There were no other restraints. She could talk normally and her legs were free. I could see that her hands were bound by handcuffs. There’s no way that she could move like this, but where is that...

“Are you alright?”

“Yuuta, at last you have come to save me. I’ve been waiting.”

“Sorry for being so slow. Also, thank you for believing in me. And also, sorry for everything.” I was a bit worried that I had stuffed so many things into one brief line. I thought it might be too much, but Rikka smiled as if she agreed with everything.

“I too am sorry. Thank you. And thank you again. By the way, is your new ability the ‘flames of love’?”

Taking a sentimental moment and making it childish. That’s Rikka for you. But yeah... my bad feeling came around again.

I awkwardly with a smile, “Umm, about that... Or rather... Did you hear everything...?” I tried to nonchalantly ignore the flames of love comment.

“Mostly.” Was she also using Shichimiya to get me to...

Ah, what else did I say out there? I shouldn’t be worried about it, but oh well. You tend to wonder, in these situations. Rikka was looking pleased, so that was good. The quarreling atmosphere we had earlier was gone. I was also really happy.

“Haha. But I’m so relieved that you’re safe. Wait here. I’ll get Shichimiya to free you.”

“Okay.”

I called out to Shichimiya. She faced us and was about to come over. She turned around and said, “Nyahaha, I know what to do without you asking anything. Wait just a minute.”

Shichimiya walked over to us, and with a click unlocked Rikka’s handcuffs. “Rikka-chan, I’ll return what I took from you earlier.” She handed over Mufassa to Rikka, who was relieved to have it back. I just watched this warm scene.

Shichimiya knelt on the ground after it was over. “Rikka-chan. Forgive me.” Shichimiya apologized in a plain voice. She even asked for forgiveness. She properly upheld our promise. I didn’t want her to go this far, but I guess she felt it was needed. It was an apology from the bottom of her heart.

Upon seeing Shichimiya kneeling and apologizing, Rikka said. “It’s okay. I’m not mad.” Rikka didn’t sound mad either. She spoke in a sweet voice. “But. Yuuta isn’t a hero. He’s the demon king; my contractee.”

“... Yeah. I understand.” Shichimiya raised her head and nodded.

“You and I are rivals. Challenge me to battle at any time. I won’t lose to you though.”

“Nyahahaha... Rikka-chan... thank you... To say something like that... I’m really an idiot... I’m the worst.”

“It’s all right. I myself cannot do math well. Yuuta is also an idiot.”

“Me?!”

Wait, what? I’ll confess I think I’m an idiot at times, but it’s not okay to suddenly use me as an example... That surprised me.

“That’s why it’s okay. You’re not the worst.”

“Nyahaha. Thanks. Hearing you say that makes me happy. You saved me. Thank you so much, Rikka-chan.”

In the end it looks like these two will become friends, just like I thought. I’m watching them become good friends before my eyes. I don’t know what’s in their hearts, but I’m sure that, after this, they’ll be waging several chuuni battles.

That’s why I’m happy these events happened. I think.

Even our fight was a good experience. I won’t agree with Nibutani saying we’re a love-sick couple, but I think that all couples go through fights, so it was good for us. Granted, I’m going to do my best so we don’t fight again.

I commented, “Well, should we be going home? It’s already nighttime.” The girls nodded. And so all three of us walked to the exit doors of the gym.

We talked about unimportant things, like how today felt like the longest day ever as we headed towards the door. As you’d imagine, today’s parting felt different from usual. We planned to head towards Rikka and my classroom to get her bag. I thought it would’ve been a burden to take it to the gym, so I took it there instead. When Shichimiya started to leave, we had this conversation.

“It’s already night outside. Will you be all right, Shichimiya? Want us to walk with you?”

“Nyahaha, shouldn’t you be asking Rikka first, Hero?”

“Well, I was planning to ask her too.” Rikka nodded, signaling that it would be nice to walk together.

Shichimiya replied with a smile, “I’ll be fine. I’m the Magical Demon Duchess after all! I’ll just act dignified and no one will come near me! ☆ “

It's Shichimiya. She's a reliable person, so I'm sure she'll be fine. Anyone would back away from her.

"All right. If anything happens, call us and we'll take care of whoever's bothering you."

"Yes. Yuuta and I shall come to your aid!"

Shichimiya looked incredibly pleased and slightly embarrassed at what we said. She covered her face with her hands and said "I'm, I'll be alright." It was charming.

"Well, take care on your way home. See you later."

"Later Sofia." We waved goodbye to her.

"Okay. Later. Bye-bye!" Shichimiya waved good bye and spoke in a small voice. She turned around and walked away from us. We watched as she left.

...

Why? What reason did she have to say that? Shichimiya, what were you thinking? I had no idea that you would do all of this. There's no way I could forget about the person I spent such an important time with.

It's so sad... I don't know what to say... Shichimiya!

"Hey, Rikka. I'd like you to listen to something."

Rikka, beside me, responded "Huh?" She looked confused, so I continued.

"Thank you so much for believing me. I love you. I say that unconditionally. That's why, that's why I want you to overlook what I'm about to do."

".....Okay. I trust you Yuuta."

“Thank you. Now, I’ll be back shortly!”

And so I chased after Shichimiya. I dashed, ran after her as fast as I could. Around the school gate, I was able to overtake her. I grabbed her wrist.

I wasn’t going to let her go, I wasn’t letting her escape. I was probably half angry when I asked her, “Why? Why did you say those specific last words?!” My voice was shaking. I was angry. I was sad.

Shichimiya had planned to never appear in front of us again. That’s why I had to ask her about it. She said the words she’d previously said she would never say: ‘Bye Bye.” There’s no way that I could forget her promising to never say that...

And so I thought, “Today Shichimiya said the words she told me she’d never say.” I couldn’t turn my back on her once I heard those words.

“Wh... Why... Why have I revealed everything to Hero...”

“It’s only natural! I know what you thought about me... I sympathized with you too! There’s no way I couldn’t know everything about you!”

“... It’s all right, Hero. If I’m not around, you’ll be happy...”

I yelled, “I don’t think so!” Now I was pissed. I’m not good at getting angry, but I had to yell. I could feel Shichimiya’s body stiffen, since I was still holding her wrist. Even so, my rage exploded.

“I was so happy to reunite with you, Shichimiya. Very happy. If you’re not around anymore, then I’ll be very sad. That’s why I want to meet again and again so we can do idiotic things and have fun! If you’re here, I’ll be happy!”

I don’t want to repeat that sad day again. Sorry, but I’m not losing my best friend again. I can’t bear experiencing that for a second time.

“That’s why I still want to be with you. It’s not ‘Bye bye!’ It’s ‘see you later!’”

“... Ohh... Hero... Yuuta... Idiot...” When Shichimiya looked up at me, she was crying.

I let go of her wrist. Once again, I looked on as Shichimiya cried. There was a time when she had never let tears fall from her face. Though she was crying, it was a bit of relief for me. I wiped some of the tears from her eyes.

“Sorry. I made you cry again. But it’s all right that I’m an idiot. I just want you to say ‘see you later.’”

“Ohh... oohhhh, oh, oh, oh...” Shichimiya was crying like a child.

Sorry, Rikka. For the second time today, I brushed Shichimiya’s head. I never wanted her to cry like this. After apologizing to Rikka, I continued to gently stroke.

“Oh, Yuuta. If you do this, Rikka-chan will get upset...”

“It’s all right. She trusts me. I’ll do this until you stop crying.”

“Ohh. Nyahahah, what if I cry forever...”

“That’s alright. I’m here until your tears stop.”

“... I’ve already stopped crying. I’m fine. Nyahaha, the Magical Demon Duchess’s lost her edge. She’s not the Demon Duchess anymore. Oh no, I’m crying again!” Shichimiya took my hand that was brushing her face and wiped away her tears.

And then she smiled. It wasn’t a ‘Demon Duchess smile.’ This was a cute smile. Well, it might be a Demon Duchess smile if we take it literally.

“Hero! I regret that you had to restrain me! I am the Magical Demon Duchess! I don’t think I can have a rematch with you like this. NYAHAAAA! I shall

be revived under the title of Magical Demon Duchess Sofia 2~ Sofia's Mystery!

☆”

“Oh! There’s no problem with that, if you’re actually an alien or something.”

“Yep. Then, thank you. I’m sorry for all I’ve done. This time I’m really heading home!” Shichimiya neatly bowed and then,

“See you later!”

“Yep! See you again!”

And so our quarrel ended as we parted by the gate.

She didn’t promise that we’d meet again, but I think I’ll definitely see her.

Final Chapter: Magical Demon Duchess Sofia 2~ Sofia's Mystery! ☆

After the Rikka Kidnapping Incident (self-titled), I returned home and got scolded at.

“Ni-chan, you were supposed to fix dinner tonight, weren’t you?”

“Onii-chan! Welcome home! We’ve finished dinner! And! Papa and Mama are mad!”

My little sisters Kuzuha and Yumeha were at the door waiting for me. One was smiling like a little angel at me (naturally Yumeha), while the other had an angry expression directed at me like she thought I was up to no good. This is what I come home to...

“Ah... My bad. I got a little wrapped up in things...”

“What kind of things? Up until now you’ve always called if you were busy and couldn’t come home on the days you’re supposed to fix dinner, Ni-chan! ”

Come to think of it, I did forget to call today. Whoops. I was kind of fighting the last boss of a game and couldn’t get in touch. Unfortunately, I don’t think they’d like it if I used that example. Well, they might not think that badly of their brother if I said that and properly apologized to them.

I kneeled down on the floor and said, “... I’m truly sorry. I was involved in a battle with a Demon Duchess. It was such a violent battle that outside contact was impossible. To make up for it, why don’t I take over your duties next week Kuzuha?”

“All right! Thanks Ni-chan! Hehe, if you want to do it that badly, then go ahead!”

“All right! Oni-chan’s cooking! Yay!”

The girls ran off to the living room delighted. I really only made up with Kuzuha, but if that makes Yumeha happy, then I'm cool with that. Granted, she might not want to say that in front of mom. It'd probably upset her. I'm still no match for her cooking and I'll probably never be. It also looks like Yumeha wasn't displeased with having to eat Kuzuha's cooking. She tends to cook more like a boy than a girl her age.

While I was thinking, I headed into the living room and got scolded by them again. You'd think a high school student wouldn't get scolded, but try telling that to my sisters, who apparently forgot. Good grief.

After being scolded again, I got to eat some of my mom's cooking (So much better than what I could make) and headed to my room. I took out my cell phone and prepared to send something I didn't get a chance to send earlier: a thank-you text to Nibutani. It was the first time sending one to her, so I was a bit nervous, but I properly wrote the characters and sent it off.

As soon as I sent it, my phone started to vibrate. I didn't think Nibutani could type that fast, but when I looked: it was a text from Rikka. What the hell? Is she an esper now?

"I wanted to speak with you about something. Is the time all right to call you? Time for me has no meaning..." and so on. It was a fairly long text. She did want to talk about something today, but usually it happened when we were together after school.

Incidentally, after Shichimiya left, we went back to the classroom and fetched Rikka's bag. We spoke until we reached Rikka's apartment. I apologized and thanked her again about our fight. It looked like we had made up. So I was curious what Rikka wanted to talk about if we had already made up. I immediately called her. After one ring, our phones were connected.

"It is I."

“Hey. Now’s fine to talk. What’s up?”

And from there we chatted until Rikka started to yawn and I could see the sun starting to rise. Two hours until school starts. No sleep for me that night.

I could only faintly pick out what we talked about near the end, but even on the way to school I could remember what we talked about at the beginning. Rikka said she wanted to go on another trip. I agreed that it was a good idea, and so we made plans to go out on our next three-day weekend. The whole night, I began to plan what we would do.

It was clear that I wasn’t the only one suffering from a lack of sleep today. Rikka was also dozing off in class. We laughed saying today was no good for studying on our lunch break. Well, I can’t exactly say that all we did was laugh. Nibutani also came over by herself to say “Oh, looks like you two are getting along again. Remember it’s because of me,” while giving her usual sadistic smile.

She added, “Maybe I should treat this like you owe me a debt.” While I agree that her role in helping me deserved something in return, I didn’t say anything. When was she going to call this in? Feels like she’s become the villain again.

Speaking of villains, our own Magical Demon Duchess, Shichimiya, didn’t appear that day. Since she said she’d appear later, I thought she’d sneak in, but there wasn’t anything to report. I was curious about it, but there was nothing else I could do to satisfy that curiosity. She’d appear again sometime, “later.”

Then time passed, and it was the day after our enjoyable three day date. The day was Monday, and as soon as I got to class, there was someone causing a ruckus already. It was Isshiki.

“OY! I got some great news! Class 3 has got this absolute cutie who transferred in!” He was so excited that his eyes were already bloodshot. Looks like it’s my friend’s turn to be the center of attention.

“Oh? That’s unusual for someone to transfer one week before summer vacation. What kind of girl is she?”

“Well, I don’t know that. I just heard some rumors.”

“... That so. You seem rather excited.” Sigh. And so before Isshiki invited me to play peeping tom, our lessons started.

A transfer student, eh? Wait a minute, wait just a minute. Why am I getting nervous? Well, there’s no reason for me to worry. I’ll just enjoy seeing another beautiful girl. I diligently took notes during class.

And as soon as the bell rang to end class, class three’s beautiful girl came in—no, trespassed— into our class. Naturally, we were still in the middle of our lesson.

“Oh! Found you Hero!”

As expected, she was the one who spoke. I knew it. That transfer student’s name was Satone Shichimiya. Alias: Magical Demon Duchess Sofia.

I couldn’t tell if she had shocked Nana-chan, but she looked over at where that voice came from. With an uneventful, “Well I guess that marks the end of class” she ended our lesson.

Nana-chan wasn’t the only one who looked spooked. I was. Rikka probably was too. The moment she arrived, Rikka looked over at me. But probably the person who was most shocked was Nibutani. Looking at her, she appeared as if her world had been shattered.

Ignoring the stares, Shichimiya came over to my desk.

“Oh, you’re feeling energetic today, aren’t you?”

“Nyahahaha, what a foolish question. There’s never a time where I don’t feel energetic! From today on I’ll be studying here. Counting on you, Hero! ☆”

She had a dazzling smile as she said that reply. Then she turned to Rikka—

“Rikka-chan, I’m not giving up! I won’t lose to you!”

—and declared war. Rikka responded with a smile. “I won’t lose either. That’s because I am the strongest!”

She had accepted the challenge with a smile. It was both an offensive and defensive smile. Not to say a smile of battle; it was just one that looked forward to some fun.

Then Shichimiya finally noticed Nibutani and walked over to her desk. We could hear a small shriek from Nibutani.

Well, that’s how it goes.

You have one chance event, then another chance event, and eventually it’s fated.

Build a world with a chanced hero, and add a world with a chanced demon duchess.

And then eventually, they’ll meet. That’s just how it goes.

The End



Afterword

Hello everyone! This is the being who resists the dark age vocabulary known as chuunibyou, Tora. No! I'm Torako!

After such a mysterious opening, I'd like to thank you for purchasing this second volume of *Chuunibyou Demo Koi ga Shitai!* that you have in your hands. Thanks to your support, this second volume was able to be published. I thank you, the editors and Ousaka-sama at Kyoto Animation for all your help.

Concerning personal matters, I received the first fan letter I've ever gotten! I was shaking with happiness. Thank you so much for that overwhelming joy. And thank you to everyone who participated in the questionnaire on the website. I really am a fortunate person to be able to read all the comments you have provided for me. And I thank you for subscribing and getting a signed poster. I never thought I would have the opportunity to sign anything in my life! I was so surprised. Switching gears again, Rikka and everyone has created Twitter accounts so, if you're interested, please follow them! They have fun talking about their work and like to chat chuunibyou style!

Now, let's talk about this novel. I was happy to portray a story that, like the previous novel, personified the theme "chuunibyou is the best!" This story was written with the impression that it would be "Rikka After," since the first story is about them falling in love. So this time I wanted to amplify the feelings to make you smile. In addition, I wanted to introduce the other boss, Satone Shichimiya and tell how she, Yuuta, and Rikka, come to peace among themselves. Rikka calls Yuuta the Demon King. Shichimiya calls him a Hero. Mori-sama calls him Gerzoni (he wants nothing to do with it!). All in all, it's more of a romantic comedy continued from the first novel. As for Shichimiya, Ousaka-sama put a lot of effort into this volume's cute drawings just like last time! Thank you so much! She's so cute! You just want her to be the actual protagonist! Perhaps she might be one now in this story. Come to think of it, last time I wrote in the afterword

that I said I would do things that I didn't do. Now that I'm thinking about it, there were a lot of things I didn't do. I was really happy to fulfill one of those by writing a story about Satone Shichimiya. Now that she's done, another part left incomplete is Yuuta's past (I think it'd be interesting to write about active chuunibyou patient Yuuta). The more I think about it, the more things I want to write about. Unfortunately, there's no swimsuit scene nor bath scene this time. I just left a lot of things incomplete! And I'm disappointed at the minimal screen time Yumeha had this time too. Well, I'm just joking (halfway serious though). So for those who've read through this afterword, thank you very much! I am grateful to all of you and I'll be happy if we get to meet again.

The absolute
cutest hiragana is "ri"
Torako